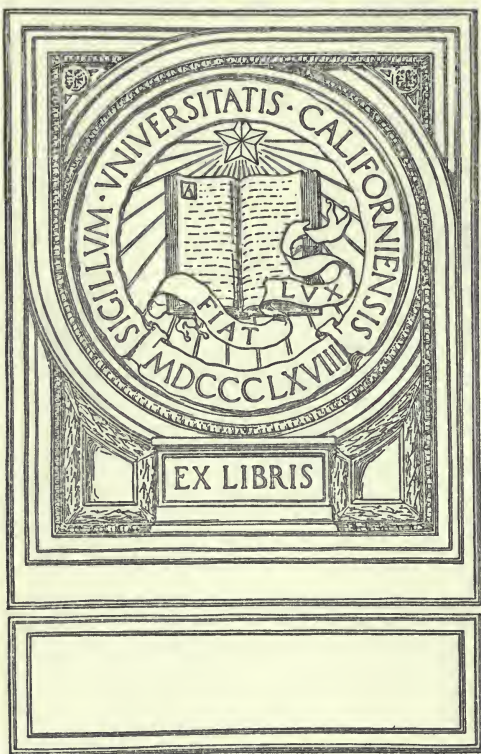


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ON THE  
EXISTING STATE  
OF OUR

# HERRING FISHERY.

WITH  
A PREFACE,

ON THE PROBABLE RESULT, IN THE CONTINGENCY OF  
A EUROPEAN WAR,

TO  
THAT BRANCH OF NATIONAL INDUSTRY.

BY  
JAMES THOMSON.

*[Price One Shilling.]*

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MDCCCLIV.





TO  
GEORGE SKENE DUFF, Esq.

Member of Parliament

FOR

THE ELGIN DISTRICT OF BURGHS.

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SIR,

IF an excuse should be wanted for the present Dedication, let me hope that it will be found in the sentiments which an opportunity of the kind may justly call forth.

As a Member of a Noble Family to the head of which the writer is under much obligation, as a Member of the Legislature, who has acknowledged, by an active zeal in its favour, the importance of a great branch of industry belonging to your native land, and prosecuted by a large number of your Constituency, a zeal perhaps not better known to any than to myself, and from the favour which I have enjoyed of your belief in the sincerity of my humble intentions for the benefit of the same cause, you are certainly the one of all others through whose influential patronage I may hope to recommend this small Work to a not unwelcome reception by others.

I shall not attempt to add anything but modest truth, which only in justice to your character, permits me to say, that in common with all those who have the happiness of knowing you, it is a pleasure to bear testimony to that private worth and to that accomplished fitness to be intrusted with the interests of your fellow-subjects, by which you are so eminently distinguished.

I have the honour to remain,

SIR,

Your obliged and humble servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE contingency of War has become reality. The state of peace and quiet in which the Herring Fishery has been going on from year to year is changed into one of uncertainty. Derangement of the former state of matters must take place, in a greater or less degree. To state the effect, in every point of view, which the War will have would be a difficult task. One can scarcely pretend to suggest a guidance for the Trade. To prognosticate evil may be wrong, whilst to hold out for prosperity may be equally from the truth. To obviate difficulty, the observance of events with prudence and caution may do much. The point creating the most anxiety is the policy of Prussia. In this there seems at present an indecision. The question is, can a neutrality by that Power for any length of time be maintained? If it can, and if it be maintained for the next six months, then the difficulty attending an indirect trade to Germany will be overcome. As to any danger attending shipments to the Baltic from an enemy, there will be, it may be said, none. There may be a nominal War Insurance, but it certainly will be trifling. The rate of freight will no doubt continue high, though perhaps, now that the coasting trade is thrown open to the mercantile marine of other nations, not higher than in season 1853. The same wants for Herrings will exist in Saxony, Silesia, and Poland, and generally over the North of Germany as before. Indeed, as by all accounts the markets are bare, and as the Norwegian Winter Fishing was not over-abundant, the likelihood is, that the desire for first supplies may be more than usually felt. The first consideration which will spring up in the minds of sellers at home and buyers abroad, will be as to the value of the article. Since the shipments of last year, this has undergone considerable alteration. It is clear that Herrings cannot be sold on the old terms. The prices of every article of consumption, both of material and of food, with the corresponding rise in the rate of wages, forbid any idea of the kind. To strike it satisfactorily, the opening price for season 1854 will be an important point. One has some diffidence in approaching it with figures. It is known that there is a necessity for a considerable advance on this side of the water, but it is not so well known how far the means of consumers on the other side will enable them to meet that advance. In the circumstances

of the case, the expense of production and of carriage come to fall heavily in a proportionate sense on the intrinsic value of Herrings as an article of food. No doubt, on a certain amount of export this would not be so much felt, but it is not improbable that it will have a sensible effect on the amount to which the trade has of late years been accustomed. Taking the opening price of 1853 at 20s. per barrel for C. B. F. or first quality of cure, then it will not be much out of place to hazard the idea that, from all that has since transpired, the price free on board in July or August, 1854, should be from 24s. to 25s. per barrel, making the value on arrival at Stettin free of duty at from eleven to twelve dollars. We hesitate not to say that, for a gradual supply, and to a certain amount, this price may be realised. The question at issue is not, however, on a few barrels reaching the market, but it is, when it is considered that it would be desirable for the Germans to take off the usual quantity. It is not whether the Germans will have the same desire to eat Herrings, but it is, how will the silver groshen, or English penny, in the consumer's hand take its place in the transaction. All things considered, it will be for the Scottish curer seriously to determine within himself whether he should not take up the position which the Emperor Nicholas will soon find himself thrown back upon—namely, that of self-defence.

Let no curer for a moment forget that the end in view is to obtain a profit for Scotland by means of the Herring Fishery, and to effect this let him reflect, that it is not so much his object to permit the Germans to obtain their supplies on their terms, as it is so to act that in the supply given the terms shall be dictated by himself. At this crisis, there is one circumstance which will probably fall out to be true. For a number of years, the mercantile houses of agency in Stettin and Hamburg, for the purpose of inducing and of facilitating consignments, have opened credits on London, against bills of lading and order for insurance, for about two-thirds of the supposed value. It is almost unnecessary here to remark, that this was a very expensive mode for the curer to assist himself. Every one embracing it has felt it to be so. In the present unsettled times, however, it is not improbable that this resource will be withdrawn. None are more keenly alive to risk than the German merchants, and if they cannot see clearly their way to the safe side of the transaction as consignees in venturing their credit, this part of the business will be politely declined. But, indeed, it may be here added, that it is doubtful if the same facilities will be offered for credits by the London houses, and we do not know that there are many abroad disposed to place real capital in London for the purpose now alluded to.

Taking it for granted that, by a lesser import into Germany, the value there would be so raised that the increased value in Scotland would be met, the question arises, what amount of quantity less than formerly would rectify the market? In such a case, one could but hazard a general idea. Let it be said that, of late years, the German markets have taken off 200,000 barrels—let it be said that,

for this quantity, returns have been made from 7 to 10 dollars per barrel—let it also be taken as a fact, that the Herrings are really wanted in their season, as an article of food, partly to gratify the taste of the wealthy, partly to administer to the tables of the middle classes, and partly as a means of subsistence to the peasantry—would it then be far from the mark to suppose that, if the supply was reduced to 150,000 barrels, the value would be so changed as to meet the views and position of the Scottish curer? It is very certain that, if this arrangement could be carried out, it would be an advantage, in a pecuniary sense, to both buyer and seller. Should the trade generally coincide in an opinion of the kind, then comes the consideration of how best to act upon it. When, however, so many intelligent and experienced men are engaged in the business, it is almost presumption in the writer to suggest a mode of proceeding. The following remarks will, notwithstanding, be taken in good part. It occurs to one's mind, then, that at the commencement of season 1854 there may be more than a usual shyness to commence the business on both sides of the Herring pond. There will exist a certain extent of uneasiness everywhere. In fact, a trial of nerve and of resolution will be called into play. Both parties may consider it their interest to hang off, and this consideration may, it is frankly acknowledged, bring each into a painful position. This state of matters could not remain long. Later than the 15th of August the campaign could not be delayed. By that time, either orders would be received in Scotland, or a few shipments might be ventured on curer's account. The difficulty in Scotland is, how to operate at the beginning of the fishing to convince the Germans that a reckless career of consignment, in the face of a Continental War, will not be entered upon. This conviction accomplished, matters would take their right position. The correspondence of the commission houses would act as the lever power, and prices would be brought to bear upon the general interest at the highest rates which a barrel of Herrings might be considered really worth in the eyes of the consumer. Let the real difficulty in Scotland be met fully and fairly in the face—let it once be frankly confessed that there is not so much solid capital employed in the Fishery as would permit the curers to hold their stocks without inconvenience—let this position be fairly encountered—let it be understood that partial assistance or relief must be sought somewhere to avoid a compelled pressure on the German markets at the beginning of the season—and the difficulty of the Scottish curers is almost altogether conquered. The position of the Herring Fishery for 1854 is no ordinary one. It cannot be so to an interest accustomed, in a time of Peace, to find an outlet for two-thirds of its produce amongst the population of a country now placed, by its Government, in a very uncertain and awkward position between great belligerent Powers. But although this position may be an anxious one, it does not follow that it is to be one which condemns the trade to misfortune. On the contrary, with proper management, the season may in future be chro-



nicked as one of average prosperity, as it certainly will be looked back upon as a guide for more certain grounds of proceeding prior to the season of 1855. Neither, at this crisis, is support to the Scottish curers so extravagant as at first sight might appear. By all accounts, their old friend Ireland will not stand aloof from assistance. It would seem that markets have there rallied, in a degree, higher than could have been looked for. Let the curers then direct, at the outset, their attention more in this direction. Let them cultivate their former acquaintance with their Irish friends, on rather a more extended basis, at an earlier period. In this direction, there will be easier terms both for freight and insurance. Many foreign vessels will be glad to press themselves into the service, and, by the time that a due proportion of Herrings are thus quitted, the atmosphere will be gradually getting clearer for a bargain with their friends in the east.

As a second means of assistance at this critical period, as suggested in the Pamphlet, the curers, or at least a proportion of them, not certainly as yet so large a proportion as could be wished, can at the outset of the season fall back upon the Red or Smoked Herring. They may depend upon it, that, in every respect, this will be a sure game for them. It is only to be regretted that the smoking houses along the coast are not more numerous; but this want will not long continue, when once the experience has been felt—how great a legitimate corrective to the German markets a general addiction to smoking the fine quality of July Herrings would be. When to this advantage, it is also found that, by this change of system, they can produce by the middle of August the finest quality of a highly dried Herring, a quality such as at no other season can be manufactured, and that for this quality, judging from the past, there is every fair and good reason to expect a remunerative price, there can be little doubt that the curers on the north-east coast, who have it in their power, will commit an error if they neglect this part of self-defence. Indeed, it is questionable if, on an average of years, they could use their skill and capital, in the preparation of July and early August Herrings, for any other market so profitably. At the present time, their object is to concentrate their attention on every means to relieve their dependence on the German markets. The day is not far distant when the railway will bring the metropolis of England and every large town along the line as consumers of Herrings, they being forwarded and reaching them in perhaps the highest state of condition in which the fish can be used, namely, after being sprinkled or powdered with salt. However, it is to the ensuing season to which attention must now be given.

There is a third power of assistance, but on this the writer feels that he is treading on tender ground, and that this assistance is not in the hands of the curers, but must rest on the judgment of others. It will be for those along the coast, having the charge of the monetary interest, to judge how, when, and to whom this assistance can

be granted. Herring curers are frequently placed in a perplexing and harassing position. The cases are numberless in which parties have been obliged to resort to immediate consignment, to extricate their finances from the pressing demands of a few days' heavy fishing; and the attraction to Stettin or Hamburg being greater than that of other markets, from the likelihood of a speedier return, it has often been that the actual results have occasioned not only a loss to one party, but to many, and have been productive of much derangement, when, under the ordinary rate of fishing, this would have been avoided. These cases, however, may not be considered legitimate for bankers to interfere, in as far as the trading risk of the business does not belong to them, when not sharing in more of the profit than belongs to the negotiation of mercantile securities. Frankly allowing this, it will also be conceded that, as bankers, there is no part of their business more lucrative than the £200,000 worth of good bills on London, remitted to Scotland or drawn for, as the produce of its fishing—giving them the above amount, indeed stated as a minimum, with their London bankers, on the advantageous terms of profitable discount, with the payment in their own issues. One is not wrong in believing, for it certainly will be freely admitted, that the Scotch agencies have evinced a wish to facilitate the operations of the Fishery, and have in many instances given the curers liberal support. This being the case, it may be hoped that the particular position of this valuable branch of industry, in the coming season of 1854, will meet, on their part, with more than ordinary attention. Should the coast of Scotland be favoured with a visit of large shoals of fish, particularly during the first part of the fishing time, it would be a thousand pities that the curing interest, under the pressure of what ought to be prosperity, should be obliged to throw itself into the hands of the Germans, if by a little more than usual support, wisely and prudently granted to deserving and industrious men, a destructive turn of affairs could be avoided. But it is a matter which must be fairly left to the judgment of parties most interested.

There is a contingency, as regards our Fishery, which may happen—and who can say, ere a solid and lasting Peace be again established, what complexities may not arise? Sweden and Norway may, before autumn, join the Western Powers. This would be, to use the often-quoted words of our great Duke, an untoward event (though untoward in a limited sense, and only as regards the Fishery), seeing that the Norwegian Fishery finds its consumption in Russia; and, doubtless, the markets in Germany, at present principally supplied with Scottish Herrings, would be exposed to greater competition in price from Norway. Neutral ports would of course be open, though, with the whole of the Russian coast blockaded, the supplies to Russia must have to undergo a long and expensive land carriage. War is really an awkward affair for the peaceful trader. If Prussia can and will maintain neutrality, then the Russian trade in Herrings with Norway will meet, in any case, with but a compa-

rative degree of interruption. The future policy of Prussia is the turning point as affecting the interest of the Scottish Fishery; but after all, take which part this Government chooses, it comes to be but an affair of pounds shillings and pence, for the Continent of Europe will still remain open through the two gates of Hamburg and Antwerp. It is possible that the advantage of liberty of transit over Belgium may soon be felt in its full force. If the writer might be permitted to deviate, for a moment, from commercial to political remark, he would say, from some acquaintance with the mind of the Prussian people, that their looks will not be of the sweetest, should their Government be led by any influence to change neutrality into aggression against England and France. The outlying Prussian provinces of the Rhine would not be worth sixteen months' purchase. The inhabitants of these provinces believe themselves Germans, but whether they consider themselves Prussians as patriotic and loyal to the crown of Prussia, is another question. It is their pride and boast that they resisted alteration on laws bestowed under French occupation—a very significant notice that French government was not thought altogether disagreeable or disadvantageous. In the present War, Prussia will not be permitted to put its paw on Hamburg. In case of need, it will be occupied by the English and French; but let us hope that the Prussian Government, declining the English and French alliance, may be able to support its neutrality.

The sympathies of the present King of Prussia for the welfare of the human race, we should say, are very differently developed in his character, from those of his brother-in-law the Emperor Nicholas. The King of Prussia is endowed with a benevolent mind. Not to speak of his high intellectual attainments, he would seem to be of a good and kindly nature. There is nothing of the despot. He is a monarch who can indulge and enjoy a hearty laugh, and he can be pictured sitting in his box at the theatre, affected by the sallies of the comic muse, till tears bedew his cheeks. He is the friend and companion of a Humboldt, and, personally, there exists in the world perhaps no greater friend to peace. Russian predilection must arise from the overweening love of family connexion—amiable in itself, though injurious in its tendency—but even that we cannot believe will be found greater than the ardent aspiration breathed by him for the welfare and prosperity of the Prussian dominions.

Ere, however, the end of September, many events will have taken place—the fleets and armies will have completed their first campaign; indeed, even previous to the July fishing, so much warlike operation must take place that the political atmosphere will be rendered clearer, and every Power will have taken a more decided and distinct position on the sphere of action.

Taking a general view of the whole matter—though certainly a Continental War could not but bring alarm to a trade so accustomed to a course of action with the north of Germany, and of late years finding a market for two-thirds of its amount through the ports of



Stettin, Dantzic, and Hamburg; yet so powerful are the allied forces by sea, in conjunction with neutral Powers—some of which can be reckoned on as certain friends, such as Holland and Belgium—that the real point involving difficulty is, whether a barrel of Herrings will bear that additional value required by the circumstances of the times. To ascertain this, will require the utmost prudence on the part of curers. Let them, then, with calmness and resolution, wait, as far as German demand is concerned, until the effect is known of the result of correspondence by commission houses in Scotland with their friends in the interior of Germany. And here a remark may not be inappropriate. It occurs to the writer that an excellent opportunity is afforded for commission houses to fall back upon the old terms of executing orders only on credits on London, and not on an indirect credit on Hamburg. This rule was unwisely deviated from about the year 1831 or 1832. The deviation may have been a facility to smaller dealers in the interior, but the business would have been more solid, had it been confined to that class of firms who have the means as easily of giving a London as a Hamburg credit. By this change, and with the rapid postal arrangements, that evil would be got rid of, so injurious in the foreign trade—namely, the uncertainty of drafts not going in order, from parties withdrawing credits when under the idea of a falling market. If a commission house in Scotland has to pay cash for Herrings with one hand, he is entitled to receive it with the other. On such terms alone can he possibly serve the best interests of both buyer and seller.

To conclude. The increased cost of production carries with it considerable anxiety for the result of the following season, and curers must nerve themselves to meet the difficult circumstances springing from the necessity of a European contest. From the experience of 1852, a barrel of Herrings may bear still a remunerating value. If it brought, in a time of Peace, 10 dollars, we shall hope that, in a time of War, 12 will be the opening price. The writer cannot let the opportunity escape of cordially wishing to fishermen and curers the blessing of a plentiful fishing for 1854. An unsuccessful fishing must entail loss—for without an overturn of capital, in stock, a profit cannot be obtained; but, with abundance of fish, money is thrown into general circulation, *sequitur*, if there be a risk of loss, there is also a chance of gain. "All is well that ends well." May this be the feeling of the fisherman on reaching, in September, his domestic hearth—and of the curer, on balancing his account.



# OUR HERRING FISHERY.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE prosperous state in which our manufactures have been for the few past years, by the extended consumption which has been going on in almost every article of commerce, have been accompanied for the two last seasons by something like a corresponding success in the adventure of the Herring Fishery. If in any other branch of speculative enterprise prosperity was unexpected, it certainly was in the one alluded to. It may be said to have been unlooked for in a remarkable degree. Not only have fishermen experienced a larger share of gain, but the curers have had the welcome visit of money in their pockets, and the merchants, both at home and abroad, have had a more favourable result to their dealings than almost any previous calculations could have induced them to expect. It may be asked, How could this desirable state of matters have happened in a trade so much complained of, and ever so notoriously vibrating between some profit during one month and considerable loss during the following? The answer will be difficult. In the beginning of the fishing season of 1852, the demand from the German markets at remunerating prices came so suddenly upon the curer, that until the first transaction was concluded, and the payment in his hand, he could scarcely put faith in an event so at variance with preconceived opinion. In the end of the year 1850, prices at Stettin had gone down as low as about six dollars per barrel, at which ruinous value the remaining stock on consignment was parted with. In the spring, however, of 1851, prices rallied, the holders, whether by some lucky change in the demand, attended, most likely, by combination amongst themselves, realised for their stocks eight dollars per barrel. Notwithstanding this rather happy forerunner for the then coming fishing, curers, from having been so severely punished, did not place much confidence in the markets, and were, for the most part, in that frame of mind, that if anything like a fair offer should

be made at home, they would accept it. Well, it so fell out that a new firm from Stettin, one till then unknown, came upon the field, desirous at first of consignment, but as they failed in that, evinced an inclination to purchase, and ultimately agreed to give 17s. 6d. per barrel—a price which, though not enriching, was still a safe one. At this rate, considerable transactions were effected, and other houses of older standing purchased rather freely. In the meantime, a few cargoes had been consigned to Stettin and Hamburg, for which higher returns were received;—a spirit in the trade sprung up; buyers at home gave 19s. per barrel—a little after 21s., and then 22s.—afterwards 23s.—and at last, in some instances, 24s. per barrel. During this pleasant career of home operation, the demand both at the German outports and interior continued brisk and animated, and the cheerful intelligence reached Scotland that the flattering and profitable price of ten dollars, or nearly par with 30s. sterling, per barrel, had been attained. The question came to be, Could such things last? To the unaccountable surprise of all, they did last, and the whole transactions of the year were completed on a scale of profit delightfully unexpected, and as little even dreamt of by any. Not only did Germany give for once a benefit without drawback to the Scottish curer, but the trade also in Ireland went more merrily on than it had done for years; added to all of which, those engaged in the growing business of smoking herrings had a share of the prosperity, the English markets yielding a fair return, and that, too, for a quality of fish for a series of seasons of doubtful value—namely, the lank or spent. Thus ended a season for a long time unexampled in its general feature of remuneration to the Scottish curer. As to the quantity of fish caught along the coast, it was counted rather under the general average of years, but the German markets drew off a quantity rather exceeding the usual amount of shipment. Indeed, there was enough for all; and though many of the boats may have been considered underfished, still the fisherman had a handsome price for what he delivered, and, with some exceptions, which, in an adventure of this kind, must ever be the case, the casting of the net in season 1851 brought to every fishing village a considerable amount of the ready “siller” to its industrious and persevering inhabitants. We must now see what followed. We shall discover what effect the prosperity of one year has had upon that of another.



## CHAPTER II.

THE season of 1852 has been described as one eminently successful. It was a season of no common interest to the north-east of Scotland. It dispelled all those clouds of hopeless uncertainty, which pervaded the minds of many, as to the living and still enduring spirit of a valuable branch of commerce. It brought confidence to the wavering, and gave new energy to the resolute. It has freed the Government from that continuous and perplexing complaint, which could only be responded to with an expression of desire to alleviate, when not possessed of the means actually of doing so. It has done more to foster and consolidate the growth of the Fishery than any enactments in the power of a Legislature to confer. It has proved, that there is an increasingly large, wide, and extended consumption for the cured herrings—provided that consumption be met by a supply—rendered desirable from quality of production. It has given evidence that, though there is and will be a limit to price, yet there is a springiness and elasticity in the value, convincing that a healthy business may be prosecuted, without an absolute necessity that the lowest rate of remuneration should be its basis. The prosecution of the Herring Fishing is known to be one of a peculiarly speculative nature. It is not so only in Scotland. It is more or less so everywhere. Whether the adventure be from Holland, for what is termed the deep-sea fishery, or in Norway during the winter, in the smooth water of its rocky inlets, the same uncertainty prevails as to favourable result. Success is ever doubtful. The fulfilment of hope and disappointment follow each other in an unbroken chain over the stream of years. So it has ever been. So it will ever remain. For this unceasing change, every one connected with the Fishing must be prepared. The persevering industry of the hardy fisherman cannot calculate its reward from the labour of one year, but from that of several. The capital of the curer, expended on his buildings and on his stock of curing materials, will not bring an annual gain, but must be subjected to intervals of depression, and only from an average of seasons can be made out a fair balance of profit and loss. As one season ends so will the other commence. The prosperity of one year gives buoyant hope to the next. The adversity of to-day shadows a gloom upon to-morrow. This truth bore no contradiction towards the end of 1852. Towards the end of October, three-fourths of the produce being profitably quitted, and, as the fisherman says, herrings doing well, curers at the same time, now

anxious to have more of what had done them good, a general rule amongst their fellow-men, engagements with boats for season 1853 became the order of the day. The train, once lighted, spread rapidly along the coast. Bargains were closed at once. No higgling or hanging back upon a shilling on the cran; an advance was instantly agreed on, equal to from two to three shillings on the cured barrel. Some few of the timorous, or those who wished to place, if possible, prudence in the foreground, delayed a little, but ultimately the price of green fish for season 1853 was over all at an advance of twenty per cent. over that of the one previous. Meanwhile, as time went on, and everything going on prosperously in the country—that is to say, every one being busy, and every one giving more and getting more for his commodity—the price of staves for barrels, and the price of salt at Liverpool, underwent a corresponding change—and this increase in their value added still a feature in the chance of the adventure being profitable. The time for fishing gradually drew on. Spring, however, went away without any movement of notice, and the summer had well advanced ere the sound of purchase or inquiry reached the coast. At length the time arrived for active operation. The state of markets had given a colour to expectation—and that expectation was not disappointed. Orders from Germany had come pretty largely into the hands of commission-houses, and business commenced freely at 20s. per barrel. Generally along the coast this offer was accepted. It was a fair price—it left a profit—and as home sales are always best upon the whole—so this transaction carried with it content. The market at Stettin was likely enough to give a trifle more for the risk of shipment, and to those consigning 21s. per barrel and rather better was returned. During the month of August appearances kept good—everything evinced firmness—and for second purchases and contracts 22s. per barrel was obtained. At this favourable rate a considerable business was effected. This was the highest price which the article attained. It had now become known that the fishing was abundant—that in various localities many boats had taken their complement of 200 crans, and that at the ruling station of Wick and along the Caithness coast, the fishing would be above the average—much exceeding that of 1852. Under this view of matters, the natural consequence took place—the former value could not maintain itself—at market confidence was shaken—prices retrograded, and down they fell at once to 18s. per barrel, at which—under the peculiar circumstances—it may be said every one quitted that had it in their power.



## CHAPTER III.

It has been stated that 18s. per barrel was the price at which purchasers for white herrings ceased in the autumn of 1853. At the rate paid for the green fish, with the advance on wages and other materials, it could not be said that, at this price, there was a profit. It might be said to be about the curer's own money. The fishing being abundant, however, particularly at Wick and on the Caithness Coast, a considerable stock was left unprovided for. It had to find its way during winter and in spring either to Ireland or to the German markets of Stettin and Hamburg. An exact opinion cannot yet be formed of the total result of fishing 1853. It will be less profitable, without doubt, than season 1852 to the curer, as it has been, from the quantity caught, more remunerative to the fisherman. On the whole, it may bear the name of having been a prosperous season. Enough has been realised at fair prices to secure a profitable balance for the adventure as a whole. As to Ireland, it would be difficult to ascertain the quantity which has been there exported. From appearances the Irish dealers have been doing a cautious and prudent business. The trade to Ireland may be said to be again concentrated at Wick, and along the Caithness coast. It is rare now-a-days that a single cargo is sent in that direction from Peterhead, Fraserburgh, or from any of the ports of the Moray Frith. For many years the curers at Wick directed their attention almost exclusively to Ireland, and though now largely engaged in the Baltic trade, still they retain their Irish connection. Of course, the great emigration from Ireland, chiefly amongst the poorer classes, lessened much the consumption of white herrings, and, at one time, the business had indeed a very gloomy appearance. However, in the past two or three years, a revival in the value has been apparent. This will be accounted for from the general amelioration finding its way through every class. The peasantry, though not so numerous, are being made more comfortable. Their food is not so dependent on potatoes, and though they do not, consequently, eat so many herrings, yet they are able to pay better for what they do consume. But it is in the months of January and February, when the trade in herrings in Ireland is at the best, and one cannot fairly judge the business done until about the month of May. To be sure, in this trade, as in the Baltic in the present season, a considerable higher rate of freight has been paid, which will account for rather a higher value at market; but still the Irish trade seems to

be solid, and placed in the hands of merchants and dealers desirous to suit the supply to the demand. Many of them have also an interest in the Fishery as curers, visiting Wick, Caithness, and Orkney, in the autumn, and returning to their establishments for the rest of the year, thus being able to superintend the sale of the fish gradually as consumption goes on, and not obliged to force large sales on arrival of shipments. On the whole, the business in herrings with Ireland is assuming a look of returning prosperity. As to spring shipments, it is seldom that orders for purchase are given from Germany—not in one year out of ten, and particularly not after an abundant fishing, and when full supplies have reached Stettin and Hamburg, prices have been on the decline. Under these circumstances, the dependence for sales in spring at home for Baltic account can never be great. It is rare that prices in spring rally at Stettin, and at Hamburg almost never. What effect the present unsettled state of affairs in Europe may have on commercial matters in the month of April, 1854, no one can predict. The progress of general war is occupying the minds of all. But this, perhaps, comes more home to the consideration of those whose largest dealings are with a central European kingdom, than to those whose industry is more immediately exerted in our own country.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

TOWARDS the end of autumn, although the whole preceding catch of herrings may not be disposed of, still curers begin to think of doing something in the way of providing material for the season which is to follow. Barrel wood comes to be first inquired after. For many years this was liberally supplied from Norway, so much so, indeed, that year after year this necessary article became cheaper. In the course of time it fell from £5 per thousand staves down to £3. However, it would seem to have then reached its lowest point. The price of staves, at from £3 to £4 per thousand, was as favourable for the Scottish Fishery as could have been reasonably desired. It fell lightly on the cost of the barrel. The Norway birch is excellent for the purpose, being not difficult to work. However, in the last year and in the present it has experienced a considerable rise in price. The reason may be a combined one—the distance from the coasts to the forests may have sensibly increased, and the rate of freight earned by the Norwegian vessels may have

become too low ; the trade being, for the most part, carried on as an adventure by the owner of the vessel, and that owner generally being the master. It is true that, latterly, from a favourable change in the English tariff, one or two establishments for the cutting of timber into staves in Norway have been set agoing, and the several cargoes which first arrived were sold at remarkable rates, cheaper than they could have been produced in Scotland. But the import of manufactured staves bears, as yet, but a small proportion to the wants of a Fishery. Norway birch staves, which were purchased in the winter of 1852 at £3 5s. per thousand, have risen to £4 10s., to £4 15s. on credit—a rise of nearly fifty per cent. The next article of material for the Fishery is that of hoops. In this there has been a still more extraordinary increase in value. Hoops which were purchased in October of 1852 at 24s. per thousand, cannot now be had under 40s. to 45s. per thousand, a rise of well on to 100 per cent. It may be questioned, if in any other branch of business, so great a fluctuation in the value of material has taken place. The good times of cheapness in the curing of white herrings are for the present gone, for, in addition to the high rate of timber and of hoops, coopers' wages, which formerly were ten shillings per week, from the increased price of food are advanced to fourteen. That indispensable necessity in the cure, salt, is not generally ordered for the Fishery until about the month of April or May. It may be mentioned, however, that shipments which were made in 1852 from Liverpool, at 8s. 6d. per ton and 7s. per ton freight, were charged, in 1853, 10s. 9d. per ton and 11s. per ton for freight ; so that, with present appearances, there is no other ground of expectation than that, in 1854, a still further advance may be experienced. This state of matters to all those engaged in the preparation of an article for the foreign market, must create considerable anxiety. There will be a large increase of capital at risk, with the uncertainty that it may be met by a corresponding return. In the meantime, preparation for the Fishing 1854 is going on as usual, and the trade is naturally encouraged by the success which has accompanied the two past seasons. The weightiest element, however, in the practical working of the Fishery, has yet to be spoken of—the mainspring of the machine—the boiler which generates the steam—the lever which lifts into prosperity, or the weight which drags into adversity. This is the bargain between curers and fishermen—the engagement of boats. This plaguy part of the business has annually to be encountered, and perhaps if ever within the last thirty years a fair adjustment between the parties will be difficult to arrive at, it is



for season 1854. Peculiar circumstances are attending it. Two rather profitable seasons have been experienced. In the latter there fell out rather an abundant catch. Prices have left off for white herrings at a barely saving price. Every article of material has advanced in value in an extraordinary ratio. Provisions of every kind are dearer than for years past. The country is on the threshold of a war—indeed, as the declared ally of Turkey, England has already passed the rubicon of peace. Nothing else can be expected than war freights and war premiums of insurance. Not a single curer or fisherman is alive, or at least actively employed, who can judge from his experience the result which will ensue in a change from peaceful enterprise to warlike struggle. The fluctuations which took place in the value of herrings in the last war are held to have been what seems more fabulous than real. At the end of one season at Wick they have been at two shillings and sixpence per barrel, and the opening price of the following has been two guineas per barrel. Such as these, it may be surely predicted, will never be again. Many circumstances will now combine to keep the road to consumption more free from downward-pressing obstacles. The feeling in the curer's mind, previous to his re-entering into contract with the fisherman, is somewhat alike to that which pervades before the purchase of a lottery ticket. The curer, until the deed is done, is on the fidgets—there is a sensation approaching in many to nervousness—the thought absorbs his waking hours—almost his sleeping. The fisherman bears the tide of expectation better. He feels himself more firm in his position—he knows that he is an existing necessity—he takes the 'vantage ground of self-defence—he waits on the attack; and it is only the needy men—needy, perhaps, through misfortune, though more frequently from trespass on the virtue of frugality—who leave their home to seek for an employer. A good crew exhibits patience to the last.

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## CHAPTER V.

It comes (he cried), our father's boat,  
 See, sister, by yon stone !  
 Not there—not there—still more remote--  
 I know the sail's our own !  
 Look—look again !—they nearer float !—  
 Thanks, thanks to God alone.—*Charles Swain.*

THERE are always two sides to a question. This is strongly exemplified in the annual contrast betwixt the

fisherman and curer. The curer needs the toil and skill of the fisherman—the fisherman the skill and capital of the curer. From their combined operations arises the benefit to the British nation.

It is true, the fisherman may push his bark to sea. He may return to land with a goodly catch of fish. He may dispose of part, but he cannot quit the whole. As the herring dies instantly on being taken from its native element, so it deteriorates thereafter every hour. The brine of the ocean must be changed into the brine of the curer. Salt and barrels must be in waiting on the shore. The first necessity—that of the fisher—yields its possession to that of the second—the curer. The practical end to be attained by these conjoined forces of national industry is a living—a remuneration for labour—a return on capital adequate to provide the necessaries of life and the varied wants engendered by the complicated movements of a civilised community.

It is clear that, in the adjustment of this remuneration, the interest of the fisherman has first to be considered. To arrive at this some data of calculation must be taken. Well, he has his boat to build, his nets to weave. These must, in some shape or other, be the production of his industry. This is the fundamental preparation for the Herring Fishery. The money necessary to its acquirement has likely been produced by frugality, in saving on the general labour of the year, or must otherwise be borrowed in anticipation of labour yet to be given in exchange. But in either case it is a fact in the fisherman's position. The fisherman and his family have, then, to be maintained. From the nature of his calling, this maintenance should be liberal. His labour differs from that of ordinary life. His strength is often tested to the utmost endurance of the human frame. His muscular system should be upheld in its highest degree. His food should, therefore, be nutritious, solid, blood-giving, and heart-inspiring. All this cannot be obtained without a certain amount of gain. From circumstances it may fluctuate, but a *minimum* it must have. The basis of the fabric must be sound, or the building totters, rents, and ultimately becomes a ruin. For a series of years past, it cannot otherwise be said than that the fisherman has had a fair bargain with the curer. For the last ten, with, perhaps, one or two exceptions, the price for the cran of green fish has been as much as the various markets warranted to be paid; and, indeed, in several years the rate was found to be too high. In season 1849 curers suffered a severe loss. Now comes the question—What has been doing, or what is intended to be done for season 1854? Well, upon this subject the mind

seems to be varied, but every man's mind is his kingdom. It is an open market. Every one is free to buy and to sell as his judgment best directs him. It would be *mal apropos* to criticise on the doings of any. At the end of the past fishing, in the what may be called Banff district—that is, reaching along the coast from Gardenstown to Portgordon—curers, prompted no doubt from passing circumstances at the time, began to make contracts for the following season. For a looker-on—a calm observer—it is difficult to account why this should have been the case, as seemingly there was nothing so particular in the features of the future, as to induce so early a decision on a bargain of so much importance in its currency. Indeed, an abundant fishing has hitherto had the effect of protracting engagements, not of hastening them, and it has never happened that the fisherman lost his interest by selling in October.

In the district alluded to, the rates agreed to may here be mentioned :—namely, at Portgordon, Buckie, Cullen, and Portsoy, 11s. per cran, and £10 to £11 bounty. For Rosehearty, Pitullie, Pennan, Gardenstown, Macduff, and Banff, 11s. per cran, and £11 to £14 bounty. As high as 12s. and £20 bounty, and 14s. per cran without bounty, it is said, at Macduff and Banff, have been agreed on. These are prices much above former calculation. At the important stations of Peterhead and Fraserburgh, curers have held back, and nothing has been done; whilst at the great seat of the Fishery at Wick, and on the Caithness coast, report speaks of business having been done at about 9s. 6d. per cran, without bounty or any other perquisite. Such, therefore, as yet, have been the different ideas of parties in acting for season 1854.

It has frequently been mooted, and, though not acted on, is the experienced opinion of most parties in the trade, that it would be for the solid interest of both fisherman and curer to delay contracts till the month of April, or that of May; and whenever this opinion has been carried out in practice, neither party has had reason to repent. Whether or not events may happen in the commercial and political world, previous to these months in 1854, tending to guide parties in their judgment, is for the consideration of curers, who are still free to purchase, and who have not so hastily entered upon the adventure.

It has been stated that fishermen should, especially during the period of the Herring Fishing, be supplied with food of a nourishing and strength-giving quality. For the most part they do live well. A crew, in good circumstances, will have their daily dinner of the best of beef. They will have



their white bread, their butter, their English cheese, their London porter—all of the best, and, if they occasionally fancy, a change to milk; they realise the ambition of the boy when raised to be a king—milk pottage flanked by a bowl of rich cream. But all this is as it should be. The mountain dew, it cannot be denied, is still a favourite beverage, but in less quantity than in days of yore. Moderation and temperance are gaining ground. Our fishermen are advancing in their ideas and convictions of moral beauty. At such stations as Peterhead and Fraserburgh, where fishermen congregate annually from every quarter on the coast, that day, the first of blessings to the family of man—the holy Sabbath—is by none more honoured in observance on the services of religion, and by strict propriety of conduct, than by him whose bread is literally and truly cast upon the waters. All hail to every progress of enlightenment of mind in the human race!

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## CHAPTER VI.

O weel may the boatie row,  
And better may she speed;  
O weel may the boatie row,  
That maks the bairnie's bread.—*Old Song.*

FISHING, it is well known, as an industrial science, ranks next to that of agriculture. To these two every art and science is but an accessory. From these are produced food and raiment for the family of man. The Supreme Being has given the land for corn and wine, the ocean to yield up its fish. The hundreds of millions who live on the surface of this secondary planet, which, by mistake, is called our globe, are thus sustained—a globe on which we are permitted to breathe but for a fleeting finitude of time. Man! proud in thy nature, feeble in thy life! “*La vie! c'est un rêve—un sange;—ne rien de plus.*” As every part of the earth has a soil peculiarly adapted for the growth of various plants—as China has its tea, America its cotton and tobacco, Poland its wheat, Russia its flax, France and Spain their vines, India its rice, so has the ocean its varied locality for the habitation of its living tribes—Greenland has its whales, Newfoundland has its cod, Great Britain, particularly on its northern coast, has its herrings.

Both the eastern and western coasts of Scotland are richly visited and inhabited by this valuable fish, but it is more

especially on the north-eastern where the prosecution of the Fishery has become of greatest value. After many years of severe and prolonged struggle, it has here settled down as a branch of industrial science. Scotland has become famed for the tillers of the soil, but Caledonia has also full reason to be proud of the tillers of the sea. A Buckiemian is the prince of fishers. Although the Herring Fishery has now reached a position of firmness—of well-doing and success—which it undoubtedly will maintain; still, there is an element in its construction which steps in to prevent its increase and development, otherwise than gradual and almost imperceptible, except over a certain recurring period of time. All other trades and professions are supplied from the growing members of general society, but it takes sixteen to eighteen years to perfect a fisherman born in Portknockie. It is true that the helpmate of a fisher is not behind in being in the way which ladies are who love their lords. Pledges of affection in the fishing village are numerous indeed. The todlin weans bask and tumble and frolic at every threshold; but yet, as the craft or calling in its true breeding, requires a service from boyhood to manhood, it must submit to the growth by the advance of generation, and not by that of annual supply. It is thus, that if the produce of the present Fishery, as it stands, could be well provided for, there is no great fear of danger from its too sudden increase. Certainly, at Wick most strenuous efforts have been made for an increase of boats, and it possesses hundreds, belonging to the port; but there the holdings, the property, is held on a different principle from that in the Buckie district. Curers themselves have large interests. The fishing is pursued on the strength of hired men or landsmen; but these are not the boats which catch the fish. This may, in a great measure, account for the comparatively low annual average and catch of its thousand boats—an average fishing being there about 100 crans per boat, whilst on the Moray side it is 150 crans. It is more than probable also that, when the fish are on the coast, so many boats throwing their nets within a certain space may occasion a loss of fish, as well as destruction to the nets, from their being frequently entangled. Many boats at Wick are annually heavily fished, having from 200 to 300 crans; whilst many others return to their homes very poorly repaid for their industry. For a few seasons past, there has been a curer at Buckie, and there the success has been ample and remunerative to the fishermen. In season 1853 it stood, as a station, at the top of the list. One chief cause must be that the crews are comprised, without landsmen, of tried, skilful, and able men.

The question may be put, About what sum might a crew of four good fishermen, with a proper, seaworthy boat, and necessary complement of nets, require as an amount of gain from his labour at the Herring Fishing? Take it in round numbers, and let it be said about one hundred pounds. The case is merely given as a general one, it being well known that no particular data can be entertained. The average fishing on the Moray side being reckoned at 150 crans, the price of twelve shillings per cran is not far under the above-mentioned sum. If the sum of £15 to £20 is laid aside annually for upholding boat, repair of nets, and replacing those which may be lost—if a further sum for eight weeks' maintenance be taken at £30—then there will remain £50, which, divided into four, would yield a balance of about £12, or rather better, to each man. Suppose this rather perhaps a favourable view of the matter—it being perfectly known how it varies in reality, many a crew being obliged to live at much less than one pound per week per man, and many being far under 150 crans in the catch—still, would twelve or even fifteen pounds be considered as an unreasonable sum for a fisherman to take home with him after two months' severe labour? During the fishing he is not his own master. He has bound himself to another. His catch of herrings is the principal operation of the year. During the winter and spring months, he has many a day, from rough weather, to lie idle. Besides, a fisherman has old age to provide for, as well as other men, in addition to the claims of a family. Without prejudice, really the sum in question would not be out of the way. Some calculation of the kind should be looked at, ere the buyer and seller can fairly meet each other. The one now spoken of is that which supposes for its basis the comfortable condition of those who form the first necessity of the Scottish Herring Fishery. Boats with hired men, as they are called, may divide with an equal catch a larger sum; but unless a shoal of fish is close upon the coast, that equality of catch is not likely to be arrived at. To apply a rule suitable for all variety of chance, difference of fitting out, difference in manning, would be impossible. In this endless variety the curer finds himself placed; and, however, much it might be wished that crews were more equal in ability, still this can, in course of time, only arise from a flourishing state of the business, and must at present be submitted to—a weak crew, generally speaking, getting very little less than a strong one. With a catch of two hundred crans the fisherman should be on the way to well-doing; with prudent habits, his days in winter should be passed in tolerable comfort.



## CHAPTER VII.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And the days o' langsyne.—BURNS.

OUR poet, in his song, has beautifully portrayed the feelings kindled by the remembrance of old friends. The pleasure arising from the knowledge that an old acquaintance is well and prosperous, is true and refined. Where there is a mutual necessity to maintain acquaintance, on the ground of interest, the satisfaction created by the continuance of well-being increases with the years which flow over our heads. The inhabitants of the north of Germany, and the inhabitants on the north-east coast of Scotland, have now, for the best part of half a century, been placed in a similar manner towards each other. The link of connexion has been our Herring Fishery. From it a mutual interest has long existed, and from it, therefore, arises a particular feeling of satisfaction in the prosperity of each. The inhabitants of Saxony, Silesia, and of Prussian Poland, show a decided taste for the consumption of the produce of the Scottish Herring Fishery, and they are enabled to indulge in this from the moderate import duty levied by the Prussian Government.

It has, from time to time, been matter of complaint by those interested in the Herring Fishery, that the markets are too contracted for the sale of produce, and for the full and profitable employment of industry. Many representations have been made on the subject to the English Government. No one will for a moment question the benefit to the Fishery, if new outlets were opened, or if, by a reduction of tariffs, exports could be increased, and if those exports could be made on terms suitable to considered value by those likely to become consumers. However, it is questionable if the views and expectations in this respect have not been somewhat over-rated. There is an indefinite idea arises in the mind of value to any movement of the kind, and the sanguine nature of man is apt, without reflection, to enlist on its behalf imagination for certainty, an ideal possession of good without its reality, the inquiry and calculation for the arrival at truth not having been pursued or sought after. There is an indefinite idea attached to the large consumption of pickled herrings, which might be found in France, in Spain, and even in the smaller kingdom of Belgium. But when these opinions are formed, has it been with a true knowledge of the habits and tastes of the inhabitants of those countries, and of the physical suitableness of the food, as a matter of gen-

eral resource, in more southern climates? These remarks are made, not for the purpose of insinuating that herrings would not be consumed, but for the purpose of conveying a doubt that so great an extension of commerce would be engendered as may be generally expected. A cold climate is favourable to the consumption of the pickled herring, the decrease or increase of which is materially regulated by the lenity or severity of the winter. Distributed over the north of Germany and Poland, the amount of export, in round numbers, may be taken at little short of 200,000 barrels—it having advanced in a rapid ratio during the last ten years—particularly to Poland. In 1853, the imports into Stettin alone is declared at about 124,000 barrels; to Hamburg and Harburg, may be given from 20,000 to 30,000; and Dantzic, from 15,000 to 20,000. Railway communication must undoubtedly have had much effect in giving impetus to consumption, by the earlier and quicker delivery of the article generally over the country. The above, it will be allowed, is a considerable amount of business done annually from the north of Scotland, with one customer. However desirable, it could scarcely be expected that an amount of goods, including freight and insurance, equal to £300,000, could be turned over annually without occasionally the selling value being under the price of production. But it is to be feared and regretted that this latter state of the case has too frequently occurred. Is the large consumption carried on at a value on which the prosperity of the Fishery can be based? We remember Mr. Alex. Willman of Stettin, a gentleman who, for so many years, has been most extensively engaged in the business, and one who requires here no testimony to the respectable position which he holds, saying, that the Germans, if they got them cheap enough, would take off all the herrings which the fishery could produce. But, unfortunately, this cheap enough will not do. From experience, from observation, and from some knowledge of the means of the greatest number of those in Germany who eat herrings, we had formed the opinion that there was a certain value above which consumption fell off. This price we had settled in our minds to be about 24s. per barrel, including freight, and exclusive of duty, at Stettin. In the annual circular of this year, of a leading commission house at Stettin, this opinion is corroborated. They mention that the standard limits (which should be more properly named the general consuming price) are considered to be from  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to  $8\frac{1}{2}$  dollars per barrel, or from 23s. to 25s. per barrel. This would, in truth, appear to be the value on which the calculation should be made by the Scottish curer in his business

with the German people—that is to say, under the ordinary state of matters, which have been going on for many years past, and on their giving a full supply, without noting that there was a limit to export, if they wished a certain value to be maintained.

How matters at present stand is quite another affair. It is perfectly clear that, for season 1854, the standard limits spoken of will not do at all. If the average price to be obtained from Stettin is not to be above 24s. or 25s. per barrel, then the prospect is dreary enough. With the advanced rates on wood, hoops, salt, green fish, freights, wages, cost of living, and changes of every kind, we do not see how the German markets can be met, unless this said standard value can be advanced. Indeed, it is questionable if the account could be more than a fairly profitable one at ten dollars, or 30s. per barrel. The value at Stettin must be raised in one way or the other. In such a case a banker would say, “Contract the issues,” in other words, limit the supply. But there is another feature in the case—the worst of all—namely, the Russian war, and the derangement which will in consequence ensue. Well, without enlarging further on difficulty, what is to be done for the best? Why, it is certain that the Germans will want herrings; it has also been discovered from the experience of 1852, that to a certain extent they can pay ten dollars per barrel; then, the best way will be to let them have just what they send for, and no more. Let the commission houses in Scotland be the go-between. We do not say to curers, do not consign, but we say, consider if you can or ought to consign. If those in the trade in Scotland would, or could, permit their produce to pass through the hands of commission houses at home, selling on the spot, they would act very wisely, and we will add, that the dealers in Germany would feel very thankful to them. Nothing bothers, perplexes, and unsettles the operations and the business of a dealer at Berlin or Magdeburg, more than the unrestrained, heedless, and continued stream of consignment which pours itself upon Stettin and Hamburg. There are some large curers who may correspond direct with parties on the Continent; but even the largest will have difficulty in making up cargoes, unless buying from others; and here it is where the action of the general commission house comes so advantageously into play, in favour of the trade generally.

Some few years back, when provisions of all kinds were much cheaper than they now are, we were of those who thought that fishermen could have delivered their fish at a rate so as to permit the curers to meet the German demand



at about 24s. per barrel; but we freely admit that now, with the change in the cost of living and of everything else, we were prepared that the price given to fishermen must advance also. But to everything there is a limit; and it is evident, under every circumstance, that he who promises 11s. per cran and £15 bounty, has his views fixed in some other direction than Germany. With great deference, we should say, that if the average cost of a curer's fish is above 12s. per cran, it will be doubtful if, even selling on the spot, he escapes with a remuneration for labour and capital. However, many men, many minds, and there may be those who, with better sources of information, and other views of the future, may think otherwise. At 12s. per cran, the fishermen should make a shift even under the pressure of the times to get on pretty well; still, if it is thought more can be allowed, why let it be given.

With war rates of freight and war rates of insurance, it is not improbable but that steam navigation from Leith, Hull, and London, will be resorted to as much as possible, and that Hamburg will be the channel through which a greater proportion of the supplies of herring will reach the interior of Germany than hitherto. Take what view of it one will, freight will be high. Certainly the important measure which has been passed by Parliament, of throwing open the coasting trade to ships of all nations, will come mightily to aid of the Fishery. Open to the benefit of a cargo of coals or salt, there is not a foreign vessel, of a certain class, arriving at Great Britain, but which may, by the means of the said intermediate freight, have the option of a cargo of herrings. This measure has been fully discussed, and its general advantages told by abler pens, but in the meantime we may be permitted to give an opinion, that it will be of much importance to the Fishery. A scarcity of that class of British freights, suitable to the trade, had begun seriously to be felt, and foreign vessels could not run to the north in ballast with profit from ports farther south than the Firth of Forth.

For the season then of 1854, let the curers be prepared for some greater than ordinary difficulty, but let this be met in no desponding mood. If they rightly consider, the game is, in a great measure, in their own hands. Instead of abiding by the old system of holding out the plate and saying—"Gentlemen, help yourselves," let the Germans ask for the quantity of food which their wants require. Indeed, the motto of the curers should be—"Keep the Germans hungry." It should be written up in every counting-house and in every workshop. By no other means can they well expect to raise

prices, so as to meet the increased cost of production. The prospect of provisions continuing dear still remains for the current year. Herrings should also bear a higher value. That they will do so in the home market may confidently be expected, and the increased rate of wages in Britain will assist this to be borne out; but whether the social condition of the consumers abroad generally will be enabled thus to cope with higher prices has yet to be ascertained.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

ON Rhine's fair banks the envied clusters grow;  
Then blessed be the Rhine,  
And blest those banks whose sunny heights bestow  
The life-inspiring wine.—CLAUDIUS.

A two years residence on the Rhine may afford some apology on the part of the writer for an humble endeavour to represent the state of matters in that part of the "Festen Land." An opportunity will thus be given, for perhaps justifying the remark, that consumption will not always equal expectation hastily formed. It may now be about ten years ago, since we believe, by a very worthy and much esteemed friend of our own, now in *Banff*, and whose name in so good a cause, we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of mentioning—that of Mr. Keyber in the commission-house of Messrs. Grant & Co.—it was discovered that a transit being permitted over Holland to the Prussian provinces, situated along the river Rhine, an export of herrings might be advantageously laid hold of. The business was accordingly entered upon, and was followed up by other commission-houses and speculators in Scotland. At the outset of the correspondence, orders for a few thousand barrels were obtained. Year after year a sensible increase in the business was observed, till at length, in the year 1848, it had amounted to 10,000 barrels. By this amount of export it was, however, found that considerable loss ensued, and that the barrel which should have brought nine or ten dollars, fell most unexpectedly in the hands of the various dealers to four. In consequence, in 1849, the import decreased to 8000 barrels. In 1850, it still went back, it being 6000 barrels, and, rather wonderful to relate, in 1851, it was little over 4000 barrels. What it has been in the two last years we have not ascertained, though we believe it to have been inconsiderable, principally, if not altogether, carried by steam communication from Leith, Hull, or London. In viewing this extraordinary falling off in im-

port, one is led to the conclusion, that the real wants of the people did not warrant the extent of the business done in 1848, and that a good deal of sanguine speculation had been mixed up with the supply of real demand. One might have supposed, indeed, rationally enough, that a very different result would have been arrived at. But such was the fact, that a want of consumption, in a great measure to all appearance naturally belonging to the country, caused a decrease instead of what was desired, an increase in demand. When it is said, naturally belonging to the country, it is meant that a preference is given by the population to another kind of food, obtained at an equally low price, as for instance to the article of pork, which, along the Rhine, is supplied to the poorer classes in abundance. A large proportion of the community holding the Catholic faith, might have been considered as likely to enlarge consumption, and it certainly has been friendly to it; but the restrictions of that religion are not so strongly enforced as in former times, and even the time of Lent is allowed to pass over, with greater indulgence as to the use of animal food. Another element of injury to the demand for salted fish, is in the supply from Belgium and from Holland, of fish in a fresh condition, by railroad, particularly of cod and haddock. During the season, these reach Cologne every morning, and are again repacked and forwarded all over the surrounding districts. As railroads extend, this supply of food will consequently increase. It must not likewise be overlooked, that along the Rhine, and especially above Cologne, as at Coblenz, Mayence, Mannheim, and Frankfort, the Dutch herrings are strong competitors with the Scotch, and obtain still a preference, at an advance of ten shillings per barrel. Above Coblenz, also, the last Prussian town of note, the expense of river transit through the smaller Duchies acts most injuriously to the consumption of the Scotch herring. The charges on a barrel of herrings from Cologne to Frankfort, may be calculated at not less than five shillings. It was supposed that when the Dutch Government, in season 1850, relieved salted herrings of the transit duty, payable in Rotterdam, of nearly two shillings per barrel, an impulse would have been given to the trade; and that this did confer a certain degree of benefit cannot be questioned, relieving the importers over Holland of a charge nearly equal to ten per cent. on the value. Cologne is a large, populous city, with about a hundred thousand inhabitants. It has a large garrison of soldiers, and it possesses a large number of the working class, employed in its numerous tanneries and sugar refineries. One, however, is disappointed in the quantity of



herrings it consumes. It is, however, divided in its citizens between those who are really well off in the world, and those who are really not well off. The former are famed for not being surpassed in being dainty in their appetite, so that the pickled herring is scarcely acknowledged in the bill of fare; the latter, though perhaps willing and desirous, are deprived, when above a certain price, of much indulgence in a variety of food. The Prussian soldiers, as a class, are great eaters of herrings, but, strange to say, they do not consume in the same proportion, on the Rhine, as they do in northern Prussia. The worthy woman, who had the principal share of the daily supply to the barracks at Cologne, retailed a barrel in the fortnight, and she was considered as about the largest retailer in the place. Cologne, however, is the central market for a considerable agricultural district, and it is also the emporium for colonial produce, in a great measure, for the upper Rhine; wholesale colonial dealers having also the trade of herrings. There are three who may be called good buyers in Cologne, who might get through their thousand barrels each annually. There are ten or twelve others who might take from one to two hundred barrels, although, when they are all served, the competition which arises is such that the business done generally ends in a loss, so that it were far better if it were in the hands of the largest buyers. In Dusseldorf, there is one firm which could work off its thousand barrels, and there may be one or two other considerable dealers in the lower Rhine. This will give some general idea of the consumption, at prices ranging from eight to ten dollars per barrel. Above Cologne, the trade is on a very contracted scale. Direct with Scotland, it is scarcely worth mentioning. At the large and wealthy city of Frankfort, there would appear to be neither taste nor desire for the article. If one calls upon the largest and most respectable house in Coblenz, he will be received in the most polite manner, by two brothers, elderly gentlemen, in a counting-house, surrounded by a dozen clerks, and be told that they have just received an invoice of a shipment direct from Scotland, which, upon being kindly shown, will be found to note the quantity of fifteen barrels—it being added, that they could not in the meantime think of extending their order. In advancing a little farther south, as, for instance, at that seat of the lore of jurisprudence, Heidelberg—sweet romantic Heidelberg! when once seen never to be forgotten—and encountering there another of those worthy dealers—and, after perhaps an hour's conversation, interesting only to one of the parties, the conclusion of the visit will be in these few words—"You can send me from Rotterdam two barrels,

as a trial." At Manheim, a wealthy sugar refiner will, upon a week's consideration, give an order for ten barrels—and so on over all, on the like contracted scale. At Elberfeld, the most flourishing town, and the centre of the most populous manufacturing district, a desire for Scotch herring would appear as yet almost to lie dormant.

We wish that we could conscientiously bear evidence to the prosperity of the Rhine provinces, in a higher degree than their present condition really merits. Agriculture might be in a more progressive state. The cultivation of the vine, as a general rule, produces the reverse of riches. The contrary is the exception. There is one good yielding wine season out of five. The four act as a pressure on the fifth. Manufactures and mining hold much the precedence of agriculture. Coals and iron, particularly the latter, are the favourite fields for the outlay of capital.

But, to return to our own island produce. Notwithstanding the drawbacks, interference, natural obstructions, harassing river dues, and town imposts, we venture to give the opinion that a trade in herrings may, in the direction of the Rhine, be cultivated from Scotland. It will not, however, it cannot, be a healthy plant when attempted to be nurtured under a system of consignment, either to a seaport such as Rotterdam, and far less so direct to any port on the Rhine. The infant state of the trade totally prohibits this, as experience has most fully proved. Commerce in herrings with the Rhine provinces, and the districts with which they may be the channel of communication, can alone be fostered and brought into beneficial and profitable operation, through the energy, intelligence, and perseverance of the commission houses in Scotland. Without appealing to the recollection or knowledge of any of those having made the experiment of consignment who may read this article, we have the opportunity of making mention of one unfortunate cargo of 400 barrels shipped from Scotland in the end of October, but which unluckily did not arrive at Rotterdam until the following February. It was incautiously removed to Cologne. Herrings were then selling at eight dollars per barrel, and the stocks all but entirely cleared off. Yet such was the effect that the above insignificant quantity—a quantity which, in the northern markets of Germany, would not have had the very slightest impression—had upon the nerves of the dealers—so paralysed were their ideas by this spring supply, that not a barrel could be quitted. It was offered at five dollars and refused. It would not have found a purchaser at four. The herrings lay over, in the full belief that some reaction must take place, from the fact of its being the only

parcel in the market, and that, in the course of a month or two, seven or eight dollars per barrel might be obtained. No such reaction did take place, and the parcel was ultimately got rid of at a grievous sacrifice. So much practically for consignment, yet, after every consideration, we feel disposed to maintain the opinion, that orders for herrings can and will be obtained by the commission houses in Scotland to an extent repaying the trouble of correspondence and conferring a benefit on the Scottish coast—these commission houses confining themselves strictly to the execution of orders, with established credits on London, Rotterdam, or Antwerp. We think that the trade would thus again gradually assume a healthy growth, and that by degrees, with the progress of liberal ideas as to the error of taxing in any shape the necessaries of life, the Scottish pickled herring may find its way as a welcome guest under many a roof where it at present is a stranger.

As an *entrepot* for the lower Rhine, the town of Arnheim would be much more suitable than that of Rotterdam. To this the consideration of those interested should be directed.\*

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## CHAPTER IX.

### BELGIUM.

THE modern kingdom of Belgium, better known in former days by the name of Flanders, inhabited by those who still like to call themselves Flemish, has been not unfrequently set forward as a desirable market for the produce of our Fishery. It is ruled over by one, who, in the prime of life, had every prospect of one day occupying in Britain, the high position now held by his distinguished and illustrious kinsman. If the Emperor Nicholas of Russia may be accounted one, if not the most talented of living monarchs, Leopold of Belgium will certainly take the place of one of the wisest. A difference of opinion as to the employment of talent, by the Czar in his immense empire, has brought Europe to the commencement of a war struggle, perhaps, indeed with probability almost amounting to certainty, the greatest and most intense, comprehensive, complicated, if not enduring, of any recorded in history, either ancient or modern, sacred or pro-

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\* For the purpose of reaching this frontier port, shippers will have the full benefit of the Dutch flag.



fane—that great war of opinion predicted by the gifted Canning. The King of Belgium has exhibited his wisdom in quite another direction. His mind has been disclosed as being full of the blessings of peace. He has given the entire benefit of his intellect in favour of constitutional government, and under that constitutional government, the nation has been awakened to new principles of action, to a new organization of commercial law, and to the advantages of improved institutions over every part of her social fabric. It is only a pity that such a king has not a kingdom more suitable in extended boundary for material defence, in the family of European powers.

The last settlement of the Belgium tariff with Great Britain, was in March, 1852, and as one prominent part of it related to the Fisheries, we hope it will not be out of place to give it as it originally appeared in the Antwerp papers in the same month:—

*La convention de pêche conclue, le 15 Mars, entre la Belgique et l'Angleterre, est ainsi conçue.*

Art. 1. Les sujets belges jouiront, pour la pêche le long des côtes du Royaume Uni de la Grande Bretagne et d'Irlande, du traitement de la nation étrangère la plus favorisée. De même, les sujets britanniques jouiront, pour la pêche le long des côtes du Royaume de Belgique, du traitement de la nation étrangère la plus favorisée.

Art. 2. Les poissons de pêche Anglaise, importés du Royaume Uni de la Grande Bretagne et d'Irlande, sous pavillon belge ou britannique, seront admis en Belgique à des droits d'entrée égaux, ne dépassant en aucun cas les chiffres indiqués ci-apres, savoir :

Harengs.—En saumure ou au sel sec, la tonne de 150 kilogramme	
poids brut	frs. 13
Autres, les 1000 pièces	8
Homards.—En destination des parcs, les 100 francs	6
Autres, les 100 francs	12
Huîtres.—En destination des parcs, les 100 francs	1
Autres, les 100 francs	12
Morue.—En saumure ou au sel sec, la tonne de 156 à 160	
kilogrammes, poids brut	22.50
Stockfish.—Les 100 kilogrammes	1

Art. 3. La présente convention est conclue pour le terme de sept ans; et elle demeurera en vigueur au delà de ce terme jusqu'à l'expiration de douze mois après que l'une des hautes parties contractantes aura annoncé à l'autre son intention de la faire cesser; chacune des parties se réservant le droit de faire à l'autre une telle déclaration au bout de sept années, ou à toute autre date ultérieure.

Suffice it to say, that the above is a great modification and reduction of the former tariff. Indeed, from its conceived moderation, it received considerable opposition from the Protectionists in the Belgian Parliament. Let us now see what benefit, or if any, this country is likely to derive from it. The first item on the list is that of pickled herrings; and here we find, unhappily, that the new duty amounts, on 150 kilo—equal to about the weight of the Scotch barrel—to thirteen francs, or in sterling, about eleven shillings. It is quite unnecessary to dwell longer to make

any other observation than simply that such an amount of duty is far too high to permit any opening for trade in the article in question.

Under the second item, however, comes the smoked herring; and here it is found that, on 1000 herrings the duty is eight francs, or, in sterling, six shillings and eightpence. Now, we are inclined to think that here is an opportunity for export. Minute calculation brings the above duty to the third part of a farthing on every herring, or, in other words, to one farthing on three herrings. Thus we cannot otherwise be of opinion than that, as far as duty is concerned, the market of Belgium is open to the British curer of smoked herrings. We are not aware if any trial has been made of this market by curers in the south, but we do not think that any one has, as yet, done so from the north. Our own experience, perhaps to be sure rather limited, leads us to believe that the consumption of smoked herrings in Belgium may be considerably extended. Flanders has a concentrated industrial population. It is intersected in every part by an almost complete network of railway. Distance over its limited though populous territory is, therefore, altogether conquered, and the carriage of every necessary of life from the sea coast to every town is brought to the lowest rate. There is nowhere that so many towns of the same class are grouped, as it were, together—Brussels, 140,000 inhabitants; Ghent, 100,000; Liege, 80,000; Louvain, 55,000; Antwerp, 90,000; Bruges, 60,000; Mons, 30,000; Namur, 30,000; Malines, 50,000; and several others of rather lesser magnitude. These are all within the circumference of half a-day's journey.

On the subject of value, or a consuming price, it would not be proper in the writer to give any determined opinion; but, from any intelligence he could arrive at from fish salesmen in Antwerp, he believes that this market might, without risk, be tried, upon a calculation of receiving from the wholesale dealer in Belgium, at the rate of twenty-five shillings for the barrel of the usual size of smoked herrings, of best quality. Antwerp possesses an excellent fish-market. The fresh fish are sold every morning by auction. It is always difficult to organise a new business on the most profitable footing, but, as a trial of the market, the salesmen who dispose of the fresh fish might be employed for the smoked herring. It may be suggested, and even recommended, that the best and most suitable, saleable, as well as most convenient, package for duty, would be in boxes of 250 herrings, the duty on which will be two francs, or one shilling and eightpence. In small parcels they can be forwarded to

Antwerp *via* Aberdeen or Leith, to Hull or London. Under every circumstance, and particularly under what may, in truth, be considered a moderate warrantable duty as above given—for certainly it involves but a very insignificant part of the value of the fish—it will not be deemed unacceptable by those interested, in the writer drawing attention to the subject. It will not be difficult to open a correspondence with Antwerp, neither will it involve a great risk—the trial of a few boxes, sending them of the very best quality, and through the medium of a respectable party in Antwerp, who will really see that the transaction is carried out in good faith, and to the fair and real return which the article can bear. It certainly is a subject which may be viewed with considerable interest. If it should be found—and of which we have little doubt—that a remunerative price for smoked herrings can be obtained in Belgium, then we think it will not be long ere the trade will assume its proper and legitimate position, and that the large dealers in the principal towns will be induced to send orders direct to curers of standing and reputation. Remarks on the other items of the tariff need not be here made. Oysters are not cultivated, so to use the word. Lobsters find the best market in the metropolis. Stock fish are not prepared. Cod could not bear the duty of twenty-two and a-half francs per barrel.

From the date of the convention it is to last for seven years, or five from the present time. In that period, much may happen; indeed, much is likely to happen—much that is both good and evil. The real interests of mankind, however, we shall hope, will continue to improve, and be, in a commercial sense, in which we are at present more immediately writing, better understood. The wisdom of entirely abrogating taxes on the materials of existence will annually gain proselytes.

The Flemish people at present are not great consumers of pickled herrings. Their own few boats or vessels, which attend every season the Scotch fishing-ground, would seem to give nearly an adequate supply. Ostend is the port from which the fishing vessels hail, and it is consequently the herring mart. The prices of their own cure may vary from twenty to thirty francs per barrel. That is exclusive of first arrivals, which sell higher. Belgium, however, being well supplied with excellent fresh fish of every variety, this naturally tends to counteract the desire for salted food. At the same time, it is worth relating, that the agricultural population are great potato eaters, even farmers who are comparatively wealthy, confining themselves to this as the



principal dish in their daily meals. In countries where potatoes are much consumed, the salted herring has found corresponding consumption; but in Flanders this can scarcely be said to be the case. On the whole, we have not much sanguine hope for Belgium as a great consuming mart for pickled herrings—but as the heavy duty at present, and for a few years, will prevent all idea of prosecuting the trade from Scotland, any further remark or discussion on the subject is unnecessary.

## CHAPTER X.

### LA BELLE FRANCE.

FIRSTLY, however, something relative to the liberty of transit for herrings over Belgium. In the list of prohibitions, and they were but few, this article, until the beginning of the year 1852, was one. To any common mercantile mind this prohibition was unaccountable. Belgium being no exporter of herrings, her interest could not seemingly be injured by a mere carriage over her territory, whilst in reality it appeared that this interest was slighted in leaving the carriage by the Rhine, without competition, open for the benefit of Holland, to the same districts of country which could be more conveniently and expeditiously arrived at over Belgium. It was quite evident, at the same time, that if a trade could be established from Scotland with the Rhenish provinces and the southern part of Germany, the liberty of transit was desirable. There is little difference on the sea voyage from the Scottish coast to Rotterdam or Antwerp—the rate of freight either by steam or sailing vessel would be about the same. But Holland or Rotterdam is subject to the influence of winter, in causing for a time a cessation of navigation, whilst from this Antwerp is clear, a fortnight's interruption from ice in any year at the latter port being considered a circumstance out of the ordinary course. The voyage from Rotterdam to Cologne occupied as much time as from Scotland to Rotterdam. The cargo had to be discharged and reloaded, and although certainly, frequently every expedition was afforded in loading from one vessel to the other, still a week in the operation was in one way or the other allowed to pass. Shipments to the lower part of the Rhine it may still be advisable to make *via* Rotterdam. It is to Cologne, and the various localities to which the article may be carried from that point, where the advantage

of the Belgian transit is found. The state of the case was brought before the consideration of the British Board of Trade, and there was one gentleman, the member for the Elgin District of Burghs, Mr. G. S. Duff, who ardently represented the truth of the matter, and who attentively took care that on the first favourable opportunity its importance should not be overlooked. The time arrived, and the alteration was granted. Herrings can now, *via* Antwerp, reach the Rhine at any season of the year. On arrival at Antwerp, they can be almost rolled from the ship to the railway carriage, and in a couple of days, at farthest, be transported to Cologne. The transit charge at Rotterdam is now moderate, not exceeding, according to quantity, from 4d. to 6d. per barrel; and at Antwerp, we believe, it will not be found to be higher. The cost of carriage by railway to Cologne, will be equally favourable as that from Rotterdam by the Rhine; whilst at Aix la Chapelle, and all the district lying from the frontier, on the line of railway, the expense of inland carriage will be very materially lessened. Added to all this, an altogether new inlet is opened for herrings, not only to the whole southern part of Germany, but even to the central, for who can say that such changes may not arise in the political atmosphere, which may occasion the line of railroad over Belgium to be the high road of commerce to that wide country, of which Magdeburg may be called the commercial capital. Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be added, for the information of those interested, that there is a decided taste at Cologne, and along the Rhine, for one quality of smoked herrings, for the supply of which the railroad from Antwerp is particularly suitable. The quality is the largest size of herring, particularly selected, and *highly* dried. They are liked, and are used without being cooked, being held equal in taste and flavour to kippered salmon. For a limited number of boxes of 250 herrings each, four dollars, or twelve shillings, will be obtained for the box; but if an exporter could sell at three dollars, or nine shillings, per box, then it is the opinion of the writer that a considerable consumption would spring up. The Prussian duty is about the same for smoked as for pickled herrings. Curious to remark, for the smaller sized herring, for roasting, there is no desire, that is, when highly dried. It is considered too strong, too oily, and has too much of the salt for the Cologne taste, they being accustomed to the small herring from Holland, slightly salted and slightly smoked, manufactured for immediate use, forwarded by every steamer, and consumed in large quantities during about two or three months in the beginning of the year.

La belle France ! that fine country, our nearest neighbour, offering us in abundance the choicest of wine, if England could but make up her mind to extend the principle which she has as yet found to be correct—that a thousand gallons, at a duty of one shilling per gallon, is equal to five hundred at two shillings, with a universally acknowledged benefit to her population—well, alas ! this land of thirty millions remains as yet hermetically sealed, by duty, against the produce of our Fishery. It is true that from some late events one is inclined to indulge in a little joyous hope—and yet the cup is so often dashed when at the lip. The Emperor of France, from recent changes, in the lessening of duties on various imports, must hold a high place in the judgment of many in this country, as thus acting in accordance with the opinions of those whom we have learned to think great, wise, and large of intellect, such as Huskisson and Peel, whose labours are left to their country as a heritage, and of those still living who belong to the same school. France, it is true, has a fond attachment to her fishermen, and justly so. She is jealous of their rights, and of their social well-being. In the day of danger, they are looked for as defence ; whilst in time of peace they are considered as no less necessary, in their occupation with the net. Still there may be an error to a nation, in political economy, in giving greater protection than a branch of commerce in reality requires. No government can appreciate the value of a Fishery more than the British—notwithstanding, Sir Robert Peel, in his improved tariff, has allowed the Norwegian herrings to be imported at a moderate duty. What has been the consequence ? It is true that there has been none, or few, imported, but this has arisen from the fact, that we have a better quality of fish, and that we are able to supply ourselves from our own Fishery in quantities equal to the wants of the people, at a price which they are willing to pay. The Fishery, therefore, has not been affected by the change. Now, might not the French Government be induced to act somewhat on the same principle ? Might not the duty into that country be so modified as to permit only, or rather to draw to its market, British herrings, in the case of their own Fishery not being able to supply the demand of the population ? This seems to be the point of consideration. The desirable end to be attained would be, not to injure their own Fishery, whilst at the same time not depriving the people of as much of an article of existence as they were inclined to consume. It is matter of a doubt, if the people of France would be much greater consumers than they at present are. This might arise from their fine, warm, and genial climate.



This is, however, no argument against the opportunity of supply being afforded. As to the smoked herring, it is different. For this there is a general liking, as well where it is warm as where it is cold. There is every likelihood that in France the consumption might be largely increased. And here it is, in the humble opinion of the writer, that at any fitting time the British Board of Trade should solicit the attention of the French Government more particularly to this quality of fish. Indeed, it is for the consideration of those along our coasts, connected with the Fishery, whether a period has not arrived, when, in their different localities, they ought to prepare petitions, on this particular point, and forward them to the Board of Trade, through their respective members of Parliament. That the British Government will let no opportunity slip of forwarding the general interests of the Fishery, there can be no doubt. It has been evidenced on every occasion. But, as it always must be a delicate matter for one government to make suggestions to another, for change of interior legislation, so the desirable part of such a petition may be discovered to be the forwarding a matter which might be considered mutually advantageous—a good alike to the asker and to the giver. The friendly position of the two governments, more especially brought out by passing events, the bias of the English nation in favour of a reduction of French wine—our being able to send to France, from the position of our curers, a rather superior quality of smoked herring—may, together, be taken as a propitious moment for the petition, may be given as a hope why France may be inclined to consider the subject, and may be held out why it may be judged expedient by the Board of Trade to allude rather especially to the smoked herring, in any State communication with the powers of diplomatic arrangement, that communication embracing the wish that it might be found, on due consideration, in unison with the interests of the French Government, to admit into France British smoked herrings at a moderate duty.

Should there be truth in what has above been written, then certainly the Board of Trade will be glad to receive petitions from those more immediately interested, as strengthening their hands in proposing that, the good of which will reach the country generally. Those petitions, whilst expressing the wish that the trade in herrings from Scotland could be increased with France, having particular allusion to herrings in a smoked condition.

What would lead to the belief that the smoked herring is an article of food much in favour, particularly of the inhabitants of southern France, is the fact of the considerable

trade prosecuted and carried on in this branch from Yarmouth, irrespective of high rates of duty, to the ports in the Mediterranean. What the exact amount of this export may be, the writer has not had it in his power to ascertain—but, that it has for many years been in existence is known to all, a proof that the food is agreeable to the taste of the people, and that, to a certain extent, they have been willing to pay for it, even when made dear to them by the exigencies of their own governments. Sardinia is the solitary point in that quarter, where the eye of reflection can look with hope at present, for a change in the spirit of legislative finance. The sympathy of the King, his government, and the people, we believe to be with constitutional England. Under the news from Portugal, it is stated that the Sardinian government has abolished all duties on importation of provisions of all kinds.

No doubt, with the progress of railway communication, and its affording convenience to a ready shipment to the Mediterranean, the attention of the curers in Scotland will be directed to opening a greater correspondence than hitherto, and to the preparation of a part of their cure for that market, as if the curers at Yarmouth can there find a profit, there will be nothing to prevent their doing so also—if, indeed, in the competition for quality, they are not furnished with the means of surpassing.

Very recently, a notice has appeared in the public press, that it is the intention of the Brazilian government to admit British cured fish at an *ad valorem* duty of 15 per cent. and that this will be fully ratified to come into action about the month of June. With this notice has also been connected the name of Mr. G. S. Duff. This gentleman has a number of Parliamentary constituents in the burghs which he represents, whose interests are directly united with the Fishery, in fact, they being amongst the most important and most numerous stations on the Moray side of the Firth—namely, Peterhead, Macduff, Banff, Cullen, Lossiemouth, and Burghead, the latter two of which may be called ports of Elgin, the former particularly. Faithfully has Mr. Duff performed his duty to those constituents—most zealously and untiringly has he watched over the good and advantage of the Herring Fishery—leaving no trouble unspared or influence unused which he could bring to add to its prosperity at home or abroad. This has been met on their part by a full conviction and appreciation of his services.

Brazil may be put on the list of new markets. Its European population are of Spanish origin. As such, what their tastes may be as to herrings, our intercourse with the old

country does not permit us to know, for into Spain the British herring has been denied entrance. Why? It would be difficult to tell—unless it is considered so exquisite in its nature, as to be worthy only to be smuggled in small quantities to the great and rich over the rugged rock of Gibraltar. About three years ago there had been some intention of an alteration—for the writer was politely shown a draft of a tariff, by the Spanish Consul in London, in which herrings were marked at 15 per cent.—also, from some cause or another, however, the reality was not to be. And so we, meantime, must rest satisfied and exert patience. An *ad valorem* duty of 15 per cent. will be 3s. sterling on a barrel of herrings valued at £1, and so in proportion, which we presume will be found no impediment to the cultivation of the trade. Spain is an excellent customer for dried cod-fish—and it is probable that Brazil will be the same. Doubtless correspondence will now be directed to Rio Janeiro, as to the capability of the market for herrings, and in this, though it is very possible to be mistaken, we cannot help forming the opinion, that in that rather warm atmosphere the smoked herring will be the one of preference.\*

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## CHAPTER XI.

“WHO has e’er been in London, that o’ergrown place,” and has travelled by sea to that second Babylon—for Babylon being the largest city of ancient times, so London has certainly that privileged renown in modern—will remember passing through Yarmouth Roads—a roadstead pleasant in fine weather, but frightful in a storm.

On the land is the cheerful town of Yarmouth. Here, as Dumas says of a town in Holland, every one would seem to have a windmill of his own, or, if he has not, that then most likely he has a smoking-house, for the landscape from the sea is rendered full of life, either by the curling of smoke from many roofs, or the roundabout movement of the sails of the flour-mill in every direction.

Yarmouth is the hotbed from which springs the renowned and savoury bloater. Everybody knows the Yarmouth bloater—none perhaps so well as the Londoner. For many

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\* The Government of France will perhaps not overlook the advantage of her mercantile marine having soon the benefit of freight from the Fishery to English and Irish ports.



a day this skilful preparation of the herring has been, will be, as it is now, a general and never-ceasing favourite.

At the breakfast table the bloater presents a most agreeable companion to either tea or coffee. Indeed, the smoked herring is a sort of cosmopolite. It presents itself at every board. There is no meal at which it does not occasionally appear. At the morning repast it rivals the haddock, but with many it is not shunned at dinner, and with many more forms an enjoyment in the evening fare. In its attendant beverage it is not particular. Though mostly found with the cup that cheers but not inebriates, it is equally at home with a glass of good ale, a pot of beer, a glass of port or sherry, and will even give a relish to that on which the oyster-lover dotes—a glass of choice old hock. If the Dutchman thought well to honour him who put our friend the herring first in salt, surely he who first applied the smoke is worthy of our just regard.

It is now many years—a long time ago—since the British Government was pleased to take under its protection the herring—when properly and snugly packed in a barrel of pickle. From some cause, however—most likely from some principle of political economy, when not of legislative sagacity—the bloater was forgot, overlooked, neglected, left to find and fight its way in this weary world as it best could. No premium was held out for its success in commerce—no fostering official hand was told to honour it with a brand of worth. Despite, however, its unprotected condition, it has bravely won for itself the esteem of men—it has become the pearl of the greater value—it is annually drawing to itself increased consumption, and consequently an increased production. From the bounties given on the cure of the pickled or white herring in former years, the attention of the curers on the northern coasts had been seduced, and directed to that branch of the business—and it may be said that, from Peterhead to Wick, for the last thirty-five years, during which period the Fishery has assumed gradually its present importance, nine-tenths of the fish have been sent to market in a pickled state. During the continuance of the bounties, the curers had been led into the practice of sending their produce to the German markets and to Ireland; and since 1830, when the bounty entirely ceased, but little change in the above localities, in the direction of the trade, has taken place. When once a certain line of business has gained a footing, from association, from connection, from habit, that strongest of all ties, both merchants and manufacturers are generally inclined to persevere in its pursuits, until some cogent reason awakens the consideration, if by an alteration

they could not devise a greater good. Such a period for consideration seems to have arrived to the curers in the north, whether or not they should devote more attention to the bloater, and less to that of the pickled herring. Certain circumstances have arisen to give well-founded reason for such considerations.

For a long time it has been well known and experienced, that, since the want of demand from the West Indies, it has been impossible to realise a remunerative price in any market for the spent or lank herring in a pickled state. Stettin and Hamburg have been tried annually, for years past, but invariably at a sacrifice in the prime cost. In the package of mixed fish, or lank and full together, Ireland may have given some aid. For a few years past, then, it has been found that lank herrings will bring a little better value when smoked, than when pickled.

All the world is aware that there is nothing so changeable as fashion; indeed, our friends, the ladies, would not long be pleased were it otherwise. But taste alters as well as fashion. This has been strikingly the case in regard to the smoked herring, in its preparation for the table. Five, ten, or fifteen years ago, a smoked herring, to be palatable to the citizens of London, could not be too slightly smoked; in fact, it was difficult even for a London factor to describe the fine shade of colour which would carry off the palm at Billingsgate. Instead of approaching to a rich golden yellow, it was to be a bright silvery white. To attain this was the puzzle. A certain limited time in the smoke—a few hours—was to be observed. A longer time spoiled the colour—a shorter spoiled the fish. This mode of preparation exposed the curer to all the *hocus pocus* of Billingsgate. For without at all calling in question the honourable character of the fish salesmen, still it would have put the wits of a conjuror to the test to account for the extraordinary fluctuations which unceasingly were advised of the London market.

It served but little purpose to change the salesman. They were all alike. If a lot was divided amongst two, or even three, it was all the same—all penny pies. Reflection led to the supposition, that by some influence the value was affixed daily, as regularly to all and sundry as the foreign rate of Exchange on a Tuesday or a Friday. Nothing could exceed the diplomatic conciseness of the London correspondent. "Yours of the 10th received. Annexed is account sales of the last parcel. Amount paid into the agents of the Aberdeen Bank. Large arrivals at market. Yours obediently." The same again, with the difference of—"but

a moderate supply, and fish in fine condition." Then again—"Fish not well packed, and, from the sultry weather, would not keep;" and so on with every variety of reason, in a few words, for every variety of price. To-day the curer was happy in a price of 30s. per barrel, in eight days afterwards he was filled with chagrin at reading 15s. To this weary work there was no end. A profit on the season was not to be had, for the black ball came round much more frequently than the white. The consequence of all this was, that though all those who had smoking-houses occasionally tried their luck, yet there being, as in every other lottery, more blanks than prizes, the business of smoking herrings did not receive that encouragement leading to its increase, or to induce parties in the north either to extend their smoking-houses, or even to use those they had to their full ability. Rather than continue at a game so disappointing and perplexing, they fell back upon their more certain friend, the pickled herring. The fish, indeed, had been so short a time in smoke that they were only suited for immediate consumption; if above a week elapsed, their worth had fled—uneatable, unsaleable. It may be here remarked that, although the name bloater has got into use for the finest description of a smoked herring, yet, in reality, it is not so; however, it serves a general purpose, and brings to mind the idea of something good, tasteful, and savoury of its kind.

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## CHAPTER XII.

"*Chacun a son gout,*" and it is well it is so, for otherwise it would be extremely dull and tame, putting aside the inconvenience of all riding on the same hobby horse. But without disquisition on such a state of matters, the general taste has again taken the right direction as regards "*le hareng fumé.*" The liking is no longer for the herring after being a few hours in smoke, but for the herring after being three weeks under that process of preparation. This admirable fish is now brought forward for consumption in the condition most suitable to its natural quality, a condition the most palatable and the most favourable to those whose skill, industry, and capital, are directed to its manufacture. There is a satisfaction both in the purchase and in the sale of a highly dried herring. If it is in prime condition on the first of September, it is no less so in twelve months after.



But what is here particularly wished and especially desired to bring in view, is, that on the north-east coast of Scotland, from Peterhead to Caithness, there is a means held out for the production of this excellent eatable in a state of perfection nowhere else to be found. This is a fact patent to those practically engaged in the business. It is a truth, that in no other locality, and it may be almost added, that at no other fishery, not certainly at either Norwegian or Dutch, is the same opportunity given for that quality of smoked herring, which is as superior to the ordinary sort as the claret of Lafitte to the common wine of France. The nearest competition is undoubtedly Yarmouth; but the difference, a great, a striking, a preponderating difference, in priority for the north, is, that the Yarmouth, and along that part of the coast of England, is a winter fishing; whilst along the shores of the Moray Frith and the coast of Caithness, the fish are caught in the months of July and August, the period when the herring is, in its season, in the highest perfection. The cure may be the same, but there is not the same article to cure. A Holstein or a Yorkshire ham may have every attribute of excellence in the cure, but as the animal has not lived in the woods of Westphalia, so its flesh has not the sweetness and flavour imparted by the acorn. Practical men will be aware that, in the northern districts, not only is there the existing advantage of quality, but that the opportunity or means is afforded of smoking without steeping—and that it is in this latter operation in which lies the true excellence. Wherever smoking is carried on at a distance from where the boats are actually fishing, this part of the business cannot be obtained.

It is not necessary or requisite to enter minutely into detail, but to state generally that there is a given time when herrings may be removed at once from the pickle to the smoking-house, and that there is a longer given time when the herrings must be steeped in fresh water, to take back, as it is called, part of the salt previous to smoking. It is in the steeping where quality is lost, and it is in removing at once from the pickle where quality is gained. Such being the case, all herrings laid past for winter smoking, and all those removed to a distance to be smoked, are what may be termed of the common cure, whilst those otherwise described are the superior. They are, as Oettinger likens the music of Auber, the champagne of herrings—rosy-red as *Oeil de Perdrix*, and delicately sweet as *Sillery*. The difference in value is worth twenty per cent. To produce this delicacy—for such, truly, it may be named—every curer in the north, who can at all manage to erect smoking premises, either

small or large, should direct his energy, skill, and attention—ay, if he is a curer of five boats, or one of fifty. In this quality of fish there is no fear or risk of overdoing the business. The herrings must hang on the spit for three weeks, and, therefore, during the continuance of the Fishing, the smoking-house can only be filled but twice. It takes a house of considerable size to hang three hundred barrels at one time, and to obtain such a quantity of herrings within a short given period requires the occupation of a good many boats. If a fortnight is permitted to elapse in the filling of the house from the commencement of the Fishing, then the curer is deprived of the opportunity of filling the house for the second time. With the fullest preparation and the most extensive arrangements—nay, if every curer along the coast had a smoking-house proportioned to his amount of cure—it is clear that but a fraction of the general fishing could be devoted to the manufacture of the most superior and the most esteemed quality of smoked herrings. As Prince Metternich can only produce annually so many hogsheads of his famous Johannisberg, so it is only possible, from the vineyard of the north, to obtain so many packages of its richest fruit. A very little calculation will place the matter in the clearest point of view. The average catch in July may be taken, one year with another, and one locality with another, at twenty barrels each boat. Fifty boats, which is a large cure, will give one thousand barrels. But there are two or three weeks of July fishing—and only one week's fishing can be made use of—so that out of the thousand barrels but about three hundred barrels can be applied to the first filling of the house, or otherwise the second filling will not be accomplished. If, then, it is found that fifty boats, in the house being twice filled, give six hundred barrels, then two thousand boats—the whole entire fleet employed in the north-east fishing—would give twenty-four thousand barrels, a quantity which, without a shadow of a doubt of this first quality, would be cleared off in the markets, in the home markets of England and Scotland, in a single month. These are facts which will meet with the concurrence of every reflective and experienced person in the business. But then, in addition, it cannot be expected, or almost looked for, at any rate for a number of years yet to come, that the whole, or even a large proportion, of the entire catch will be so directed. At present there is but a very small part, indeed, of the herrings so made up. However, if the curers generally would but give their minds to it, if they would permit their reason to be superior to their inclination (for undoubtedly they may be inclined to the easier

cure of the pickled herring), much might be effected in giving the herring fishing on the north-east coast a new character and a new interest. There are few engaged in the business with the required capital to carry on the white herring business but who could manage, one way or other, to raise a smoking-house proportioned to their wants. He who cannot spit 300 barrels, let him do 100—he who cannot manage 100, let him try 50. The remunerative part of this branch has not yet been taken notice of, but on inquiry it will be found greater, more equal, more to be depended upon, more belonging to that class of manufactures which yield something like a regular return for capital than the other branch under the name of the white pickled herring, depending as the latter does, on the greater risk attached to a foreign market rather than the comparative safety of a home; not so much, indeed, a money risk, for in this respect the foreign market has always been a safe one, but in a greater safety from fluctuation below a remunerative value—of course, always supposing that the herrings are rightly dried, and not as formerly, the weak, tasteless, and inadequately smoked herring for keeping no longer than about the time necessary for roasting and eating.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

“*Was haben Sie für Aussicht?*” is a question which, many a time and oft, has been addressed by the worthy burghers and dealers of Stettin, Magdeburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and Breslau, in relation to the coming season of the Herring Fishery; a question very natural on their part to put, but rather difficult on the part of another to answer otherwise than in a sense indeterminate and general. However, not alluding at present to the view which may be taken as to the trade likely to be carried on, in season 1854, between Scotland and Germany, it will not be out of place, if a few more remarks are made on that branch of the business in which the population of our own island is more immediately interested.

No doubt, a greater outlay of money is required to prosecute the manufacture of smoked herrings, than simply to salt and barrel. But this is a consideration which has proved no obstacle in the minds of curers in the South of Scotland and on the English coast. There is, also, no doubt but that the one process requires a skill and attention differ-



ent from the other, or rather a skill in addition to the knowledge necessary to the practical operation of pickling the herring. However, again, this skill which has been so fully attained in the south, can be as fully and as generally arrived at in the north; as a proof of which the comparatively few curers in number, who have in the north directed their energy to smoking, are producing an article in every way equal to those in the south.

On the east coast of Scotland, this branch of the business is flourishing in Aberdeen, Montrose, Dundee, Burntisland, and Leith. On the west coast, its principal place is Glasgow. The above localities are not stations for the fishing. The fish are procured from the north, consequently they are steeped, and therefore come under the rank of second quality. It is true that, to a certain extent, fish from Stonehaven may be brought to Aberdeen and smoked without steeping; and it is true, also, that occasionally considerable quantities of herrings are got in the Firth of Forth, but there the fishing is irregular, and later than in the Moray Firth. The curers at Montrose, Dundee, and Leith, have establishments at Peterhead, Fraserburgh, and Wick, for their supply of green fish. Great attention is paid by the curers in the south, and they have succeeded in bringing their cure to a high state of excellence. Their smoking-houses are erected on the most approved plan, with every necessary convenience for the trade. Some of them, particularly at Montrose, are upon an extensive scale.

As to smoking, in a profitable point of view, it will suffice to make a reference to the prices obtained in the Liverpool market in the two last seasons. These prices have ranged from 23s. to 26s. per barrel, according to quality. What the nett profit to the curer may have been is not the question. It is, whether, with these prices, are they better than with 18s. per barrel for the Hull crown brands and 14s. for the lanks—of pickled herrings? The answer is left to those interested in the matter; though it may be conjectured, if not affirmed, that the answer will be favourable to the smoked.

In leading the attention, particularly of the curers in the North, to these matters, another suggestion may be offered. With a trifling exception, the package of the smoked herrings has hitherto been that of a barrel or a half barrel in size, not a great deal less than that for the pickled herring. However, might it not be a great improvement to make, to a considerable extent, a change in the package? Would it not be desirable to sell by the piece, instead of by the barrel? Although still retaining the barrel package for a pro-

portion of the cure, the article seems exceedingly suitable to be put up in boxes. These boxes might contain each 100, 200, or 250 herrings. They might be made of fir wood, neatly planed, with sliding covers. To add to their finish, the boxes might be lined with fancy paper. Now-a-days, there is a neatness in the making up of every article of household consumption. The landlady cannot even buy a penny-worth of soda, but it is presented to her in a small package labelled and sealed. There is a word in German (*appetitlich*), meaning to excite appetite or desire, and one can conceive, in a fine plate-glass window, nothing of a more desirable appearance than a box of these rich, yellow, golden looking herrings. It may be relied on that many a box of eight or ten dozen would be introduced and sought for by families, as part of winter store. For the Australian market, it would seem that each smoked herring is nicely rolled in grey or brown paper; and that, in this way, they reach that distant colony in the finest condition. The Dutch transport their smoked herrings in small wicker hampers, each containing so many pieces, but this package would not be easily or so cheaply obtained in Scotland.

In drawing attention to the increased manufacture of the smoked herring, let the curer in the north not forget that every fifty barrels, which are made of the most superior kind, and every hundred barrels laid aside for winter cure, will tend materially to rectify that derangement which has, in every probability, more than for a long time past, to be encountered during the ensuing season in the German market.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

The water rush'd, the water swell'd,  
 The fishermen sat nigh;  
 With wishful glance the flood beheld,  
 And longed the wave to try.—GOETHE.

IN these wonderful times, there are so many wonders that one does not well know at what to wonder most. The electric telegraph is a wonder. The crystal palace is a wonder. The submarine wires are a wonder. The colossal steamships are a wonder. There are wonders without end; and more appearing every day. But above them all towers that wonder of the nineteenth century—the Australian gold discovery. Here the mind is almost lost in its reflection. The mind finds it difficult with satisfaction to conceive the con-

sequences, past, present, and to come. Gold—rich yellow gold—is the enchantment in the land which, fifty years ago, was known by a different name—a name disliked by all, and seldom mentioned but when necessity obliged. Fifty years ago, it had the disagreeable name, grating to the ear, of Botany Bay. How extraordinary that, once on a day, men should be sent as a punishment to a land which now to arrive at is looked on as a blessing. Verily, *tempora mutantur*. In the beginning of the century, a few vessels were employed to carry from England to the coast of New Holland, those who had acted in disobedience to the laws of their country. In the middle of the same century, from the same England, to the same country, in a single year, upwards of eight hundred vessels of the largest tonnage have been employed in carrying free emigrants—men from every class of society—and along with them, not only necessities of life, but luxuries of every kind, which the most refined or wealthy community could desire—silks, satins, laces, woollens, and cottons of every description, coarse and fine, jewels, wines, costly furniture, equipages—all that could minister to taste or adorn the rich; all this exported, not in the expectation of realising an ordinary value, but in the certainty of an advance of double, triple, quadruple its usual price. However, it may be asked—What has all this to do with the Herring Fishery? It has a very great deal to do with it. Whilst the orders of the Australian merchant in their execution have reached every village in the country—whilst here the blacksmith has to fabricate his iron ploughs and horse shoes—whilst there the wright has to make his carts—whilst here the tailor, and there the shoemaker, is busily at work—so, in the past season of 1853, amidst the multitude of wants, the king of fish has not been forgotten. Thousands of barrels were purchased, both of pickled and smoked herrings, on the north-east coast, to find their way, *viâ* London, to Australia; and also a large quantity went from the west coast, by way of Glasgow and Liverpool. This may be considered an event of highest importance to the fishery. It is full of bright hope and reasonable expectation for the future. The circumstances adhering to the Australian market may be looked on in every way favourable. Australia is no foreign market. There high foreign duties are not levied. The colony is our own—its inhabitants our own countrymen, our own sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, cousins, every degree of relative, bred up and accustomed to the same habits and manner of living as those whom they have left at home. It is not a poor colony, but one teeming with all-powerful gold. The herring, therefore, has not to



fight its way among the poorer class. When bought, it can be well paid for.

It being one of the most distant markets, though every day, by the magic influence of steam, coming somewhat nearer, the transaction from the time of shipment in Scotland until a return is received from Australia will occupy a period of months, under the most favourable arrangement of sale and remittance, unless, indeed, the order is forwarded on Australian account, accompanied then by a credit opened on a London or English house. This, however, instead of being inimical to the real interest of the Fishery, will be found rather to be a healthy state of matters. As it would not suit the convenience of many curers in the trade to have their capital locked up by consignment to a market so dilatory in remittance as Australia, so a third party will be called forward, through whose agency the business will be effected—namely, the commission merchant established on the coast of Scotland; and it is pleasant to learn that already, in season 1853, a considerable business through this legitimate channel has been satisfactorily carried out. Some few curers of abundant capital may make a direct venture to Australia, but they will not be many; they will prove the exception to the general rule. The season of 1853 was no doubt the first when anything approaching to general demand has been made for Australia, but then it was also but the second year of gold-finding, and the second likewise of that monster emigration, so to speak, which has been the natural consequence of the gold discovery. The trade in herrings with Australia for season 1854 must be patiently waited for, no doubt, with a mixture of anxious fear, lest some opposing circumstance should arise. Meantime, the best of hopes may be entertained. Should the population of Australia, composed, as it principally is, and principally will be, of Scotch, of English, and of Irish, take to the consumption of herrings, either for the white salted herring as a partial material of food, or for the smoked herring as a partial material of taste, indeed, particularly if the smoked herring finds its way largely into favour, then a new guarantee has been created for the solid prosperity of the Scottish Herring Fishery—a guarantee most assuring to the industry of fishermen and curers—a guarantee full of increased conviction to the British people of the value of their Fishery. To be too sanguine is frequently injurious, but to indulge in reasonable expectation has a cheering effect on all; it is, therefore, that the season of 1854 will possess more than ordinary interest in its anticipated bearing with the land of

gold. Ere herrings of the ensuing catch can reach Sydney or Melbourne, it is within bounds to suppose that another fifty thousand emigrants have been added to the present population—to the living beehive of human industry.

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## CHAPTER XV.

WHAT changes take place in this world of ours! This is but a trite and common observation. There is a word in our language which formerly was little heard of, and in its use but seldom applicable, save by perhaps the gardener, or by the worthy individual performing an amusing part in *Hamlet*—one who generally is employed as the last tradesman by the human race—namely, “*Heu me miserum!*” the gravedigger. But now the name “diggings” has become proverbial as a household word. It is heard in every circle of society—in almost every family it brings with it the memory of some relative—one thinks of a brother or a sister—a cousin or a friend. It has a sound of gold—the mind immediately associating the possession of every other worldly good. Never does a mail arrive from the “diggings,” but a lucky letter brings to some one or other the happy tidings of a nugget. Never does a mail depart but it conveys the hearty wishes of many a thousand fond hearts for good luck, and a fortunate stroke of the pickaxe.

This name, which bears a charm with it, may not inaptly be applied to another adventure, not so distant as Mount Alexander. There are miners on the land, and there are miners on the sea. The struggling sail of the fisherman is analogous to that of him who has to wander from spot to spot until he falls upon the gold. The fisherman has nightly to change his track until he comes upon the trail—to-night he tries the distant ground—in the following he keeps close to the land—now his sail is spread westward—now to the east. The north and the south have each their nocturnal visit. But the prize—the gold—the fish—in its location is unknown to all. It is only to be had as the fruit of perseverance. If, on a fine morning of the summer month of July or of August, any one will ascend the Hill of Doon, he will behold a prospect to the sea in one sense of pleasing interest. He has before him the Herring Fishing ground of nearly all the fishing stations of the Moray Frith. His eye will take in a distance of many a mile with a rarified atmosphere—the hills of Ross, of Sutherland, and of Caithness.

In his view over the blue wave will be seen the space on which the nets are cast by the tiny fleets of Gardenstown, of Macduff, of Banff, of Whitehills, of Portsoy, of Cullen, of Buckie, of Portgordon, of Lossiemouth, of Burghead. But by all these how unequal the success! The habits of the herring are unknown—they are a mystery—and yet they have their instincts. There is evidence that, towards the end of summer and in autumn, they annually congregate on our northern coasts, in millions, billions, trillions—but this is all; further can no one say. In their ways they would seem to be capricious;—perhaps they are guided by the wind—perhaps by the weather—perhaps by the calm—perhaps by the storm—perhaps by the darkness—perhaps by the moon. That they are there, every one is confident—but where? Ay, that is the question.

As to wind and weather, it must be allowed that they have each a sensible effect upon the success of the fishing. And to this it might be thought that calm weather must be most conducive; but such, from experience, is not the fact. In the season of 1852, at the important station of Fraserburgh, the boats were not withheld from sea by bad weather oftener than three or four nights. During the whole eight weeks of fishing, the weather, in its moderation, was everything which could be desired. Not so the success of the fishermen. The fish were caught but in scanty quantities, and nothing but the indomitable spirit of their nature could have conquered the weariness of disappointed toil for so long a period. A fisherman will say that there is nothing like a breeze—something very like a gale—for stirring up the fish. Too much of this will not do either; but it is singular to remark, that on a stream tide about the middle of August there is scarcely a year passes but there is a blow—if one may so call it—in the Moray Frith, and mostly always another about the first week of September, or at the close of the fishing. This latter gale sometimes is thought to be unpropitious, driving away the last hope of a prosperous finish—sometimes it comes in the right time, when, with a heavy shoal of fish, the barrels and salt are all used up—for two days of a glut are no joke to the curer—and if the anxiety for the third day is relieved by a visit from rude Boreas, he for once escapes complaint, and gives a welcome rest to the wearied.

As to darkness, one cannot say how the fish feel under it, but it is well known that a dark night is in high favour with the fisherman. Nothing is more common than to hear one of these good fellows observe, “That the night was too light, and so the fish would not rise.” The creatures see the



nets. As to the moon and her benign and soothing influence, the idea sounds eccentric; however, a notion has been formed that, where a lighthouse is erected, there, from the dazzle of its glare upon the water, the creatures are enticed. If such should be the truth, why throw overboard the thought that the herring may love to lie lazily under the moonbeams? When once on the coast during the continuance of the moon, may not its fascinating enjoyment retard the progress of their travels—may not the sportive play of the night give place to dreamy listlessness in day? Really, there are more wonders in the deep than poor mortals think of.

## CHAPTER XVI.

I saw an empire vast—its star  
Burns o'er the horizon's eastern bar;  
Its walls of Iron, its domes of Gold  
Were piled by mighty hands of old.—T. L. HARRIS.

THE wooden walls of Old England in former days were its ships of British Oak—in more modern times and in the future, its Iron wall is, and will be, the railway. This mighty engine of power in locomotion is a distinguishing feature in the present from the past. By its labyrinth of intersection, the “tight little island” has become a fortress, and Britannia sits in all the dignity of a lovely queen, secure against the storm of conflicting strife, pursuing unmolested her grand destiny of giving the initiative in civilization over an entire world.

During the present year of 1854, in the northern division of Scotland, the event of the most striking importance will be the opening of the North of Scotland Railway—of the great trunk line from Aberdeen to Huntly.

It is almost needless to recapitulate what has already become so clear to the public mind, the manifold advantage springing from this source of interior transit, or to mention, what must alike be felt by all, the debt of gratitude owing to its originators, more especially to those spirited individuals who have more latterly, through good and evil report, put their shoulders to the wheel with indomitable perseverance, to carry this noble and patriotic work into full execution.

It is evident as the sun at mid-day, that our coasting trade by sailing vessels, and almost by those of steam, is to cede its transport in favour of a carriage more certain, more

expeditious, and more economical—that by the railway. It is true that there may remain a partial transport of grain in bulk by sea, and it may be some time ere the heavy article of coal find its way to the north by the power of the iron horse. To this it may, however, be predicted, that it must arrive at last.

With these few observations, let us come to the point more immediately at issue. It is not the present object to dwell upon the animating influence which the Northern Railway will have upon agricultural industry, but it is an opportunity to write of the development which it will create in the resources of our northern sea.

This development, it is true, will not immediately be given. The trunk line now in progress leads through the interior of the country. But the trunk once completed, the branches must follow, must in necessity as certainly follow as the truth in a problem of Euclid. These branches must and will seek the sea. Then will come the time when the Herring Fishery will show itself as it had never done before. Then will it be stimulated to its highest point. It will not be the work of a day or of a year, but ere the summer sun takes five times his round what is now spoken of will be seen, felt, and experienced as an enriching reality. It is no idea of fiction—it will be—that in the year 1860 the railway will reach Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Banff, Portgordon, and Burghead. For the railway, the North Sea has an intrinsic value. To the North Sea the railway will give a new distribution of its power of production. The one will justify and maintain the other. Farewell then to the occupation of the welcome, plodding cadger, the creel may remain on its ancient resting-place—the broad shoulders of the blythe and buxom fisher lass, but the rather rickety cart, and not over-fed horse, will have ceased their traffic. The cod, the haddock, the salmon, and the herring, will find by the rail a far greater distribution in the country than they have hitherto ever done.

It is not along the coast of the Moray Frith alone to which benefit from the Northern Railway will arise. There is one parish in its destination—namely, Burghead—which will bring the whole productive force and power of the northern counties immediately into action, that is, if Lossiemouth, having already its line to Elgin, does not supersede the intention of that to Burghead—in either case the good will be effected. From Burghead, a daily ferry to Cromarty and Invergordon will be established. Most probably a steamer will run to suit the arrival of the different trains. The former place will be reached in half-an-hour, the latter

in an hour. Thus, in addition to the Fishery, will be opened up the resources of Ross and Sutherland in their agricultural and commercial wants. From Burghead to Wick—the present great seat of the Herring Fishery—the distance is but fifty miles, so that a steamer daily, in a few hours, can run the distance along the coast, calling at any of the intermediate points eligible, either for passengers or freight. This is no visionary plan. On looking at the map, the natural necessity is obvious.

On the Moray side, the district—peculiarly a fishing one—betwixt Cullen and the Spey, is that to which a railway will likely give the greatest impetus. The railway to Portgordon will accomplish this. Then, that district may, indeed there is little doubt will, if we look forward for ten or fifteen years, become the Yarnmouth of Scotland. Imagination can well picture the smoke rising from a hundred roofs.

It is not probable that much active movement will take place in furtherance of the branches, until after the opening of the trunk line. It would be well, in the meantime, however, if the inhabitants generally in the northern counties would seriously consider the good which is to arrive, particularly all those in any way interested or connected with our fisheries or with agriculture. The days are gone when large profits were expected from investments in railroads; but all those in Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, Morayshire, Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness, who have a sum greater or less to spare, at perhaps three or four per cent. should resolve, when the day of action comes, to lend a helping hand. The profit, the advantage, the prosperity of the country generally is the object to be attained. Buchan is a level district, so is also Banffshire, where the branches have to run. The lower part of Morayshire may be called a bowling green. Of heavy cuttings there will be none. The rivers present no difficulty, if we except the Spey. The execution of its bridge may occasion a year or two's delay. What has been done on the Deeside Railway, or from Lossiemouth to Elgin, may be done over all. No reasonable doubt can be entertained but that, when once the line from Aberdeen to Huntly has proved the power of traffic from the north, the junctions will not be delayed. The ensuing autumn of the present year will tell the tale. It will pioneer the way; and the day is not far distant when the cattle, sheep, wool, grain, and fish of every kind, will roll on the railway to the south—adding a goods account to the present lines of thousands of pounds, and blessing and rendering more fertile and productive that part of our noble country which never yielded to foreign foe.



## CHAPTER XVII.

THE writer has discoursed, in a cursory manner, of the different markets at present open for the produce of the Fishery. There are some other things which may be shortly treated of.

A few years ago, there was a good deal said about boats, and it was supposed by many that they might be improved in their build, especially as to their safety in those sudden storms which frequently break out during the fishing. Captain Washington, a most enthusiastic friend of fishermen, gave much attention to the subject. It was not likely, however, that any improvement could otherwise than gradually be taken advantage of. As things are, they must be spoken of. Of the boats used on the coast, there has been a marked characteristic in those belonging to Buckie, or to the old Buckie boat. They have not, perhaps, so pleasing an effect to the eye as those which, after another fashion, have been more recently built at Peterhead or Wick, but, on the other hand, it is not so certain that they have greater fitness for a particular employment. As to safety, they have a roundness on the after part which coincides with the opinion of practical men as being most suitable to meet the short sea prevalent in the Moray Firth; and, doubtless, the ideas of the fishermen themselves have, in this respect, been carried out in the original build. In the interior, or hold of the boat, the large breadth in the after part is excellently adapted for receiving the herrings from the net; for their being preserved in good condition till arrival at harbour, and for their good delivery. No men shake their nets better at sea than those from the Buckie district. This is known to be estimated by curers; and their having plenty of room in the after part to work may, at all events, in some measure, account for this feature in the business. There are some things good, though old-fashioned, and one will not be far wrong in believing that the old Buckie boat is one of them. Fishing is a most peculiar craft, and in none, perhaps, must the theoretical yield more to the practical.

What would seem, in the present day, to be of much consideration—and in relation to the safety of fishermen, and to the growth and prosperity of the Fishery, is the subject of harbours; and in their improvement and enlargement, the more especially for the convenience and accommodation of boats. Without entering upon the larger field of harbours for the mercantile marine, employed on the coast, involving large expenditure, it will not be out of place to draw

some attention to that which can be more easily achieved, and which, in the future, will be a corresponding assistance to the advantage of railways in promoting the increase of supply which that new power is creating, and will continue to create, in demand. Where many thousand pounds would be required in the one case, but a few thousands would satisfy in the other. The harbours along the coast, of herring fishing stations, which at present accommodate fifty boats, might, with no great outlay, be made for the convenience of a hundred, and those now having room for a hundred might be enlarged to admit two hundred. It should be remembered also, that it is a different undertaking, that of so improving the entrances of harbours, to which boats may run with safety, when taken in a storm, to that which must be entered upon when the safety of sailing vessels of larger tonnage has to be considered. It will, we believe, be found that fishermen are not so inclined to congregate at ports which are marts of general commerce as they are at ports of lesser consequence, and where their own particular calling forms the principal trade. For instance, we should say that Boddam is more likeable by the fishermen than the large and stirring harbour of Peterhead, and that, whilst its locality is so favourable for Greenland enterprise, its Herring Fishery would not suffer but be encouraged by its separation to the smaller harbour of Boddam—that is, provided, of course, that the latter port was on a scale suitable for boats to the extent of the fishery as at present prosecuted at the former. It is the opinion of the writer, given humbly, and with the greatest deference to those who may not be of the same mind, or who differ as to its importance, that in the contemplation that in a few years, the transit of herrings by sea must give, in a great measure, way to an interior transit by railway, the time has arrived, demanding the serious attention, for their own interest and profit, as well as for that of fishermen and the country, by proprietors, and by those having an interest in harbours along the coast, to their improvement and enlargement, in as far as may meet the growing wants; and of the Herring Fishery, and also, of the next important, that of the cod and haddock.

In the annual report by the Commissioners for the British Fisheries for fishing 1852, the number of boats is given at 11,010; but then that number includes decked and undecked boats, and those employed in the cod and ling fisheries, so that it is impossible, from this document, to find the real number of those employed in the Herring Fishery, or to be made aware, whether in this branch there is an increase, or what that increase may be. To be sure, it is stated that

there was an increase over the previous year of 96 boats, but without determining the branch to which they belong. The writer, however, has been enabled to procure the number of herring boats at the three fishing villages of Cairnbulg, Inverallochy, and St. Combs, for the two years of 1840 and 1850. In the former year there were 56 boats, and in the latter 77, being an increase in the ten years of 21 boats, or at the rate of 2 per cent.—the largest increase being at St. Combs, the next at Inverallochy, the lowest at Cairnbulg, at the last there being only an addition of one boat. The writer is perfectly aware that this can be no sound data for the whole Fishery, but the villages are those at which all the boats are used for herrings. If the writer is not mistaken, the increase in the district of Wick, in the last ten years, would be found to be very considerable. At the same time it is at the villages, or it may almost now be said, towns of Buckie and Portknockie, they being the most vital nucleus of the Fishery, where one could most wish to know the state of the matter.

In the report above alluded to, the number of fishermen and boys employed at the fishing in Scotland and Isle of Man for the same year is given at 41,187. But here, again, we are at fault. There is no discrimination between the Herring and the Cod and Ling Fishery, or between real thorough-bred fishermen, hired men (if they be included in the 40,000), or boys, so that it is again impossible to know the increase of those—namely, the thorough-bred fishermen—upon whose energy and skill the real prosperity of the Herring Fishery fundamentally depends. The increase is stated, on the year, at 249 fishermen and boys; but in what locality, or in which branch, unfortunately that we cannot know. The increase given upon 40,000 of the population seems remarkably small, and would lead to the supposition that either as sailors, or emigrants, or in some other way than what could be desired, the youth of our fishermen for the greatest part annually disappear. But this surely cannot be. If we take the three villages spoken of, and allow in them four good men to the boat, there would in the ten years be an increase of 84 fishermen, which, taking the number in 1840 at 224 men, would give an increase for the ten years at the rate of about 4 per cent. per annum. Assuming this data merely as an idea, it would give a very different result upon 40,000 than 249. It would seem to the writer, and he believes that he will have many to join him in the same opinion, that the most valuable part of such a report would be the correct number of able-bodied sea-going tho-



rough-bred fishermen, living at the different localities and prosecuting the Herring Fishery—showing the increase or decrease of this body of men, whose existence and social condition is of so great intrinsic worth to the British nation.

In the report, the Board seems still to attach considerable value to the brand. Well, it is but very natural that this should be the case. But we fear that its real importance is overrated. Fairly considered, however, if the good which it confers is not much, it must be conceded that its objectionable part has been removed. No curer wishing to do himself justice will export his fish before they have been ten days in pickle, and, therefore, his laying hold of the brand places him to no disadvantage, in as far as time is concerned. The combined catch is given in the report at 602,660 barrels for the fishing of 1852. Of this quantity the number of barrels given as branded is 169,159½—being rather above a fourth of the whole. The quantity exported to foreign ports and to Ireland is given at 283,526 barrels—showing an excess over the branded herrings of 114,366½ barrels. The quantity given as exported to ports in Europe, the whole being (with the exception of 2879 barrels to Russia, and 7344½ to other places) to Germany, at 221,979—being an excess over the branded of 52,819½ barrels. The export to Ireland is given at 58,305½ barrels; but it is impossible to say, from the report, how many of the 114,366½ barrels exported unbranded went to Ireland or to foreign ports. Enough of information, however, is given for us to see that the home consumption is by far the most valuable to the Fishery, and that in this branch no attention is given to the brand as a requisite to the sale of the article. Indeed, in the foreign trade, when one reads in the correspondence of respectable Stettin commission-houses, firms whose names were some few years ago attached to petitions signifying the great value of the brand, such sentences as, “Send us good herrings, well selected and well packed, and as to their being branded or not we are indifferent,” the natural reflection is, that the interest of the Fishery would not be seriously affected when this part of the functions of the Board had ceased.

There is a good deal said in the report as to the employment of her Majesty's ship *Tartarus* and *Porcupine*, for the protection of the Fishery and the rights of our fishermen along the coast. This is the part of the report of not the least worth. The annual supervision in this regard, is requisite, as having to do with the vital interest of the Fishery. But wherever her Majesty's servants have a duty to perform it is sure to be done efficiently and well.

We must leave the Honourable Board to follow the determination, or result, or suggestion, or recommendations, or whatever else it may have contained, of the report of the commission of inquiry, held the other year at Edinburgh, into its perfections and imperfections—into its uses and abuses—and into the wisdom or otherwise of this Board long continuing, so unique in its kind, and as a solitary remnant of the old school of political economy.

There are some other matters to be considered, more immediately under the control of the curers themselves, the principal of which are the terms on which they make engagements with the fishermen. And here we find that, irrespective of universal opinion, the wicked bounties still remain. There is not a curer in Scotland but who, if asked the question, will give his voice against them. Even fishermen themselves, those of them who speak without prejudice, allow that they act as a premium or bribe to indifferent crews, whilst the others really do not want them. It has been observed that, were it not for the bounties, a greater competition might arise for boats, and considerably higher rates might be given for the cran than prudence justified, it being found much easier for the man of smaller capital to enter into the business in the one case than in the other. But it is a system bad in principle look at it as one may—money! money! it is always welcome, and difficult to be refused, even at a future sacrifice, for a present enjoyment. All are aware that the curer who gives ten shillings per cran and ten pounds bounty to the boat catching two hundred crans, pays eleven shillings per cran for his fish—whilst the same fish at the same price to a boat catching 100 crans costs him twelve shillings, and so on in the scale; so that, until the end of the catch, he really does not know at what rate of profit or loss his sales till then have been effected. Notwithstanding, in the present season of 1854, the system is going on, vigorous and flourishing as at any former period, so that one can form no other belief than that it will go on; and that it forms an attractive feature in the business, too strong to be resisted by either party, and in its seduction overbalancing any weight of argument which may be brought against it. It is surprising how strongly custom and habit act upon the affairs of this world, and how difficult it is to effect salutary change, when so opposed. Not only can curers and fishermen not escape the delusive charm of the bounties, but because custom led them, in days gone by, to name 200 crans per boat as the quantity to be bargained for—so, for the most part, they think they would not be right if a different quantity was proposed. In some

cases, when the quantity has been changed to 150 crans, it has been found to be an improvement—a more fair and equitable adjustment of risk—calculating on the fact that 150 crans per boat has been in nineteen cases out of twenty nearer to an average fishing than 200. Enough has been said upon points upon which there is no ignorance—upon points which have been pleaded often. Some reflective men, both fishermen and curers, will resolve on encountering change when it bears good on the face of it—others, perhaps the most, will be inclined to keep to the old beaten track. Well, let the truth in this find its way as it best can, the sooner the better. Notwithstanding any practical hindrances to the profitable working of the Fishery, it is worth while here to deduce the fact, that in the trade of fish of qualities and kinds generally, Britain is making a most rapid progress, from the statement in the returns of the Board of Trade, of exports for the year 1853—the export of fish being in excess over that of the preceding year to the amount of £100,000—a most wonderful increase for a single year, when its proportion is considered, it being given for 1852 at £350,396, and for 1853 at £456,398.

It would be very desirable to know the particular statistics of this immense advance by our country as an exporter of fish, but in the meantime it leads vividly to the reflection how valuable must be the good social condition of our fishermen, as on the growth of their number must ultimately hinge the point on which the export must turn, either advancing, retrograding, or remaining in a stationary position.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FAREWELL.

THE writer has endeavoured, in a general way, to describe the state of the Scottish Herring Fishery as it at present exists. In a broad sense, it is a state in which it has lasted for the past thirty to forty years. During that period, every one in Scotland has had an idea, more or less comprehensive of its value, whilst many, many thousands have had much experience of its benefit. A Fishery of any kind has ever been held to be a source of national wealth, based as such a possession is, not upon a fluctuating foundation, but upon one unchangeable. The place of habitation for every living thing being laid down by the immutable law of Divine Providence, so, it is found that on the northern shores of Britain, in the work of creation, it has been order-



ed that the fish called the Herring, should, in order to carry out the purpose of creation, congregate annually at a certain season in countless numbers. They are offered to man as a part of his food, the condition of his obtaining it being simply that which was connected as a blessing with his own creation, namely, the practice of his industry, the sweat of his brow, the use of his thinking and physical power. In the harvest of the sea, the husbandman is saved the labour of planting the seed; at the appointed season he has but to gather in the fruits of its increase. Under the guidance of the same wisdom, the corn does not every year grow with equal richness, neither has the labour on the ocean at all times the same reward. But the promise which has been given, that the one will never fail, may be applied assuredly to the other. It is this connection of a Fishery with the first necessity of men, that of food, which places its worth in so clear a point of view. When man has an abundant supply of sustenance, then follows the application of intellectual power, to ameliorate his condition, by the arts and science of civilised life—but not before. Food is the primary want, and therefore follows the distinguishing importance of our Herring Fishery.

It appears that in the thirteenth century, Herrings were known of in the Baltic, but without now going into the past to inquire when the possession of our Fishery was discovered, and how it has progressed, let it suffice to mention a few particulars of its present position.

The number of subjects of her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, whose industry is directed to this branch of production, cannot be exactly stated. From what is known, the number directly employed is great, whilst that of those indirectly aided in industry embraces the population of the whole surrounding coast. From the statistical report by the Commissioners for the British Fisheries, the only document of the kind to which reference can be made, the relative amount is given only as regards Scotland, the English statistics along the Yarmouth coast not being included. This report is, no doubt, carefully compiled—as carefully as the instructions to the various officers demand, and though not perhaps perfect, yet is serviceable as giving an authorised detail of the Scottish Fisheries. It is one part of the duty of officers, which is indispensable, and which, until otherwise provided for, speaks much in favour of their continuance.

In addition to the general statistics of boats and fishermen—the former 11,010, the latter, 41,187—the number of coopers is given at 1702; of persons employed in cleaning

and packing, at 22,835 ; of labourers, 4822 ; of fishcurers, 1264 ; making a total of persons directly employed in the Fishery of 71,810 ; and this, be it remembered, is in Scotland alone. But further, we are told that, in the conveyance of salt, there are annually about 27,000 tons of shipping employed, with crews amounting to better than 2000 men. In the export of herrings, there is a tonnage required of 35,000 tons, with crews of nearly 3000 men. There are upwards of 80,000 square yards of nets. The value of boats is supposed to be not under £200,000. Altogether, the value of boats, nets, and lines, is upwards of half a million sterling. These statistics include, certainly, both the herring and cod fishing, though it will not be contradicted that by much the greater part belongs to the herring. Any one considering attentively the above figures, must be impressed with the magnitude of the trade to which they belong.

It has been already remarked, that the first necessity to the success of a Fishery is a body of strong, hardy, bold, and skilful fishermen. These qualifications belong to the class in Scotland in a pre-eminent degree. They seem as if of a peculiar race, born for the stern duties required on the coast which they inhabit. After a lapse of many years, late events have brought them forward to perform a part for which the practice of their peaceful occupation has kept them always prepared. The British Government has very wisely and considerately given them an opportunity of enrolling themselves as a body of marine militia, on very favourable terms. Many of them have embraced the offer, and those who hesitated would certainly have changed their mind, if they had reflected that their required duty combined in it one to themselves, and it may be said, to their own property, namely, the defence of their own fishing-grounds, a property to them certainly freehold in the strictest sense, for none but themselves can give to it a value, and by none can that value be removed.

As to the means for a comfortable living, it has been a general belief, and we should be inclined to say that it is a true one, that the annual gains of fishermen from the prices realised from fish, though at times and seasons, from wind and weather, these gains may be irregular, are, upon the whole, equal, if not above, any obtained by labour in the other classes of society. On the other hand, it has been represented that many of them, in their dealings, did not manifest that much progress was made in making a good use of what they did gain as they might. There may be a good deal of truth in this. There may and does still exist much want of forethought, and habits of careless and hurtful ex-

penditure are far from being eradicated. However, in the last twenty years, it will not be denied that, in many districts, great advance has been made and is making to a better frame of mind. Many, we know, have laid past considerable savings for the winter of life, and there are many also who have a pride in having their dwellings, their boats and nets, and everything about them, in the best of order. Much has likewise latterly been done in the way of education for their youth. More will likely soon be accomplished. In the benefit of any Government general measure they will largely partake, and the day, it is to be hoped, is not far distant when crosses instead of signatures will be altogether out of fashion. Improvement of mind will not make them a whit less inclined to brave the blast of rude Boreas, and their sinews will not be relaxed by obedience to the laws of a moral and, therefore, happy life.

It has also been remarked, that the curing of fish is the next link of connexion in the Fishery. Without the assistance of this branch, the labour of the fisherman would be in a great measure negatived. In Scotland there is found to be established upwards of 1000 curers. There is an old saying, "that it is not the trade which makes the man, but the man who makes the trade." This may be well applied to the business now under review. The curing of herrings had for many years to struggle with counteracting influences. The business laboured long under the excitement given to it by the bounties, bestowed from the best intentions by Government. The effects of the bounties were long felt. They created a spirit of rash speculation. For a long time the business had to contend with an inequality in markets. After the peace of 1815, the German consumption was but comparatively small; its growth did not equal the growth of production. For some years, indeed, from about 1825 to perhaps 1838, the foreign supply and demand was pretty well regulated, for during that period, the Germans had their wants pretty nearly wholly executed through the medium of the commission-houses in Scotland. At that time the trade of Wick and Caithness sought for its principal support in Ireland. When the Irish markets, however gave way, then came an increased pressure on Germany. Then came several years of much fluctuation. But ultimately, from the much cheaper rates at which the general business of curing could be carried on, the curers were enabled to meet the German markets with some profit, at rates so moderate as to encourage increased consumption. Latterly, therefore, the Germans were taking off annually increasing quantities, and curers had every prospect, had the state of things continued, to



see the day when their whole stocks would be required to meet the different markets, whilst they had reason to look for a new ally, to the maintenance of price from every new outlet. Notwithstanding every obstacle and every fluctuation, there is evidence to believe that the business of curing herrings has not, upon the whole, been a bad one. There is no trade without its attendant difficulty. Without prejudice, we believe that as much money has been realised in the cure of herrings in Scotland, as in most other branches of manufactures, the amount of course proportioned to extent, and supposing that equal skill and intelligence attended the one case as the other. That there are many curers in Scotland who have prosecuted the business with more or less success, for the last thirty or forty years, and who, in a spirit of enterprise, perseverance, and intelligence, will vie with the members of any other class of society, is a fact. Out of a body so numerous, there are many whose names the writer has not the pleasure of knowing; but it will not carry with it displeasure to any if the writer takes the opportunity, and uses the freedom, of naming a few who have been long, it may be said, rather leaders in the trade, and who, by their large transactions, honourably carried out, have conferred much benefit to the country.

In the foreign trade, without the least approach to eulogium more than deserved, the firm which, from length of standing, extent of interest, and management in a general point of view—a firm, for many years, it may be truly said, distinguished above others on the Continent, under the name of Messrs. Walter Biggar & Co.—is at the head, the present firm of Messrs. Nisbet & Co. In addition to their excellence as curers, they have long acted most beneficially to the trade, and in a most consistent manner, as commission merchants. Mr. Biggar was the best friend the foreign trade ever had, in as far as he was the first who brought it into regularity, and who always acted fairly between the seller at home and the buyer abroad, being fully in the knowledge, that without a reasonable profit at home, the curing could not be carried on, nor his friends abroad efficiently served. The next whose name, as a curer, we may take the freedom to use, is that of Mr. Methuen of Leith. This gentleman has, for many a long day, occupied a first position in the trade. He has evinced a high spirit of enterprise. His fishing stations are in the south, on the Moray side of the Firth, at Caithness, in the Highlands, and in Orkney. He is extensively engaged in the home and foreign trade. His transactions must have spread a deal of wealth amongst his countrymen, and he certainly merits, for so much good to

others, to have retained a large share to himself. On reflecting on the numerous stations at which a party of enterprise may be inclined to work the Fishery, seeing that the success of fishing being uncertain, it would not be prudent, even if attainable, to burden one station with too much risk, one observes the practical benefit arising from having the district officers along the coast. It is a better argument in favour of the brand at home, than for the brand abroad. The argument, it is true, may come under the name of expediency, for some will say that every manufacturer should, from his own means, provide for the management of his establishments, be they however numerous. Without attempting to contradict this general principle, it will be allowed that the superintendence of an officer to give a brand to fish, under certain regulations, for selecting, salting, gutting, and packing, very much facilitates and encourages the enterprise of those willing to employ capital in the Fishery, on an enlarged scale, and on different points of the coast, when the individual so inclined cannot, from his presence being required at the head or chief station, personally superintend the others. There cannot be a doubt that this is a practical good which the present staff of officers confers. It cannot be said to be a benefit unequal in its operation; it is open to all, and by this means the Fishery is the more likely to draw towards it a larger capital. As long as the Government thinks right to continue the Board, let none of its benefits be denied; indeed, in plain truth, and without partiality, all interested in the Fishery have no reason for any other belief than that the whole Board is actuated by a spirit and a wish, by its duties, to advance the interest of both fishermen and curers, and that all connected with it—Secretary, General Inspector, and every individual officer—would feel very glad if, by any enlarged powers, the establishment could have increased effectiveness. It must not also be overlooked that the Board is the authorised medium (some such medium being always necessary) through which the Government applies any grants of money for the improvement of harbours. It is matter of regret that a larger sum could not be thus appropriated. It appears, by the report, that the improvements of the harbours of Buckhaven, Scalisaig, Cellardyke, and Latheron Wheel, for the year 1852, embrace only a sum of about £6000, part of which was contributed by proprietors. The improvement of Lybster harbour, by a Government grant, and under the action and superintendence of the Board, may be given as an instance of how much good might be effected, provided the Government considered that the financial re-

sources of the country could be spared with a more liberal hand in this direction.

Amongst many enterprising curers in the smoking branch of the business, we may use the liberty of mentioning those of Mr. Thomas Napier of Montrose, of the Messrs. Davidson of Dundee, one of the oldest firms in the trade, as also, Mr. Davidson of Aberdeen. At Peterhead, we have the Messrs. Simpson, now for many years on a most extensive scale, both in the home and foreign trade. In the Banff district, the curers have principally directed their attention to foreign markets; here the individual cure varies from about ten to thirty boats—but no where can fish be found of a better quality for the Stettin and Hamburg trade; and such parties as Mr. Murray of Whitehills, Provost Carney, the Messrs. Watt, and Mr. M'Eachran, of Macduff, have now for many years conducted this branch in the most perfect manner.

At Portsoy, Cullen, Lossiemouth, Burghead, Helmsdale, Lybster, and all along the coast, there are many of much excellence in cure, too numerous to mention. At Fraserburgh, a station than which none is likely to become more important, there are twenty to thirty curing, each on a moderate scale, but all producing an article well suited for the Baltic. This cursory catalogue would be very incomplete without giving some evidence that the Fishery, in its chief seat, has its living votaries, as energetic and enterprising as at any former period. For long standing, and extent of cure, we have the names—Oag, Brebner, Davidson, Cormack, Waters, Sutherland, Sinclair, and, indeed, a host of others, who are putting their shoulders bravely to the wheel, in keeping up the fame of Wick, as the first herring fishing station of Great Britain, and for aught the writer knows, of the world. The writer believes that he has thus given evidence that our fishermen are secure in the assistance of the curer, and that whatever outward obstacles may come in the way of the Scottish Herring Fishery, they will be met with firmness, supported by intelligence, which if it cannot altogether overcome difficulty, will assuredly accomplish the maintenance of character for superiority of management. May a kindly, friendly, and sympathising spirit be ever a chief link of connexion between fisherman and curer, whose interests are so inseparably bound together.

The writer has now accomplished the task voluntarily imposed upon himself. He has written in the belief that he had collected some information, however limited, which might be agreeably brought before the general reader, and



particularly before those interested in the Fishery of their native land.

Hoc scripsi non otii abundantia sed amoris ergate.—TULL. EPIST.

“I have written this not out of abundance of leisure, but of my affection towards you.” Of the truth of the first part of the quotation, the writer cannot lay hold, for unfortunately from a long course of indifferent health, he has had but too much abundance of leisure. To the second clause he may lay some claim, having the pleasure of personal acquaintance with many interested in the Fishery, for whom he must ever have sincere regard, and wish truly for their prosperity.

A last farewell, then, to the *past*—may the future be bright as the sunbeam after a dewy morning.







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